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OF FICTION AND ADVENTURE

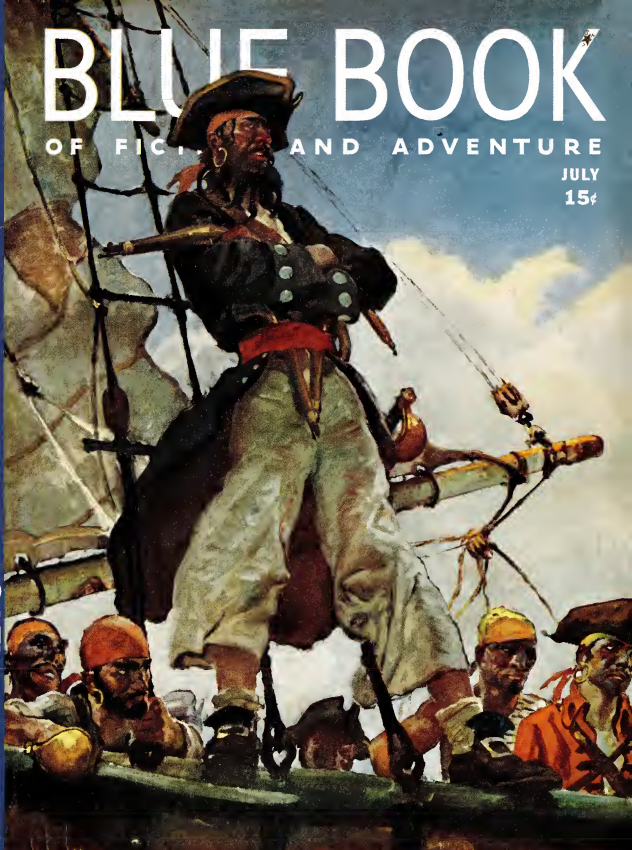
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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

VOL. 69 No. 3



MEIGS FROST • MICHAEL GALLISTER • ROBERT MILL
H. BEDFORD-JONES • FULTON GRANT • GORDON KEYNE

Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS to illustrate "THE DEVIL IS DEAD"



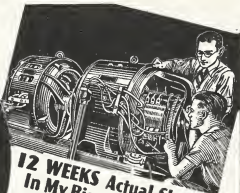
J. C. Audubon

Almost neck and neck, they raised the bold headland of Cape Frio
Then it was crack on all sail, stoke the fireboxes, and race for the entrance!

From "Stormalong" ("Ships and Men"—No. XXXI), beginning on page 101.

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BLUE BOOK



JULY, 1939

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Except for stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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The Platypus Nugget



A strange Real Experience from the Australian boyhood of—

JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

FOR many, many years I have been possessed with the desire to put upon paper all that I saw and heard during those fourteen days in the little township of Koobabulla, Australia, while "The Platypus Nugget" was visible. Old residents use a curious figure of speech when talking of that dramatic period. When referring to any happening that took place during those days they say it occurred "while the big nugget was alive."

Into the township of Koobabulla at midday on that eventful December day walked a strange, long-haired person who proclaimed himself an evangelist. He belonged, so he asserted, to no particular sect, but he was certain that he had a mission to turn the thoughts of the Outback folk to matters spiritual. His clothes were in tatters and coated with red dust, he having walked thirteen miles along a bush track from the nearest town. His face was drawn and thin; the deep-set eyes held the glint of madness.

It was a scorching day of an Antipodean summer. Koobabulla panted under the hot blasts from the Never-Never country, and across the bare plains danced the dust-devils in the invisible arms of the desert sirocco. A half-mile beyond the aboriginal camp, was a stagnant sheet of slime-covered water called Death Lagoon; and from the banks of this pond came the plaintive lowing of half-starved cattle. Koobabulla might have been a suburb of hell.

The wild-eyed stranger decided to hold a service in a tumbledown shearing-shed

during the afternoon, and the men of the township, more from curiosity than religious fervor, rolled up in full strength. At the moment there was much discussion over the stories told in London by Louis de Rougemont, a wonderful liar, who asserted that he had seen huge vessels of gold in the camps of the blacks, and these arguments may have had something to do with the choice of the text, which the stranger took from St. Matthew: "*Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses.*"

He had a queer frightening voice that had the quality of a lash of sound. One quailed before the accusatory hiss he put into his words. They were wasp-like, vicious, acid-drenched.

"The accursed gold!" shrieked the preacher. "The vile unholy metal with which Satan forges the chains that drag the souls of men to hell! Thrust it away from you! Despise it! Spit on it! Let it not touch your fingers lest you be polluted and barred forever from the Kingdom of Heaven!"

The attack had attained a point of hysterical oratory, when a disturbing element reached the door of the shed. There was a shuffling of heavy boots, throaty cries of surprise, of disbelief, of wonder.

For an instant the preacher paused, then, with astonishing vocal force, he screamed a question, "What evil thing cometh here to disturb men who struggle toward salvation?" he shrieked. "Come forth, thou instrument of Satan! Show thyself!"

The human mass within the doorway broke apart, and through the lane they made came the evident cause of the disturbance. He stood there apart, a lean, handsome devil known as "Frisco Harry," an exile from California, whose proud relatives on Nob Hill provided him with a weekly allowance of twenty-five dollars while he kept three thousand miles between himself and the Golden Gate.

"I am no instrument of Satan," he said quietly, and his cultivated voice was strangely soothing after the scream of the preacher. "That, you should know, is a libelous term that might get you into a jolly lot of trouble. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Surprised but not defeated, the ranter returned to the attack. "What have you to offer in place of the words of salvation that I bring to men?" he cried.

A smile appeared on the face of the American. "Only this," he answered; and as he spoke, he raised his right arm so that all could see the object that was resting on his upturned palm.

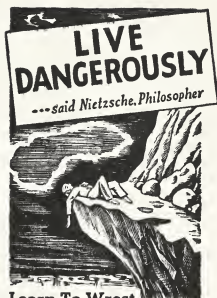
SOMETIMES in my dreams I see the uplifted hand of Frisco Harry and the thing that rested on it—as I saw it on that scorching afternoon, the hot sunbeams streaming through the openings between the ironbark slabs, and making woolly balls of flame as they struck its yellow surface, blinding the eyes of those men whose faces were turned toward it in dumb worship. Awesome was that thing on the palm of the Californian.

That was what the old-timers call the "birth" of the great lump of gold that received the name of the Platypus Nugget. For to the most stupid observer, the yellow mass bore a startling likeness to the head and bill of the duck-billed platypus.

"An instrument of Satan you surely are!" shouted the preacher. "Take that thing away! Take it away lest the anger of the Lord fall upon you! Hide it from the sight of men who seek salvation!"

Frisco Harry laughed softly, lowered his arm and moved downward. In spite of the shrieks of the preacher, the audience melted. Every man in the shed fell in behind the owner of the nugget as he headed for the Digger's Rest. Salvation, for the moment, was thrust aside by the tremendous curiosity to learn where the Californian had discovered the treasure.

(Please turn to page 141)



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The BAG of

By MICHAEL GALLISTER

His Majesty, after examining M. de Rozier's proposal to cast off the ropes of the captive balloon at Versailles and mount into the air with the machine, has forbidden it and ordered the Lieutenant of Police to prevent it, as being too dangerous. His Majesty graciously permits the experiment to be made with two condemned criminals.

—*Gazette de Paris*, Oct. 20, 1783

THE saucers on the table of the café jumped, as the young man banged down his fist. He was pale with chagrin and fury.

"Absurd! Let vile criminals have the glory of being the first men in the air?" he cried hotly. "Never! Not if I have to brave the King's anger!"

"And jump from the air into the Bastille? Hardly worth while," said his cynical companion. "What have you done about it?"

"What's to do? I've appealed to every one at court. They all laugh at me. They say the idea of flying through the air on a bag of smoke is all nonsense. Yet they've seen us go up with the captive balloon, you and me both!"

The Marquis d'Arlandes inhaled a pinch of snuff. He was a dried-up, blasé, tired little man with twinkling eyes, always in search of new experiences.

"You've not struck the right note," he observed shrewdly. "Always appeal to a woman, my friend. The most powerful person at court, for example, is the Duchess de Polignac, governess of the royal children."

"She'd laugh at me, like the rest," muttered Rozier, his eyes tragic.

"Very likely," Arlandes placidly agreed. "But not at me."

"Eh?" Rozier looked up hopefully.

"I shall see her within the hour; account the matter closed. But I want frankness from you, Pilatre." His piercing gaze checked the joy that rose in the younger man's face. He tapped his tortoise-and-gold snuffbox, choosing his

words with care. "You and I are friends. We've been the first men in the air, you and I. We've done what no one else has ever done—ascended in that smoke-bag and looked down on Versailles and Paris from the length of the rope. Well, be frank! You want to cast off the rope entirely and take flight: why?"

"You can ask that?" Rozier broke out. "You, who have shared the thrill—"

"Tut-tut!" intervened Arlandes. "If you fly, I fly with you; it'll be a new sensation. But you're not weary of the world, as I am. You have some deeper reason; I can feel it. You're young, ardent, healthy; you've money and social position. You were born to be an idle waster. Why, then, take to the air? Already your name is famous because of what we've done. Yet you demand flight, demand it with a tragic frenzy. Why? You've nothing to gain by it."

Shrewd, cold, merciless words that cut deeply; Rozier flushed under them. "Who is she?" demanded the other.

Rozier hesitated. This man was his friend, yes; that was why—

At his continued silence, Arlandes shrugged slightly. "Very well; you do



SMOKE

In this first of the "Men in the Air" series, the author has somewhat tampered with history in the interests of a good story—a very good story indeed. (The actual tragedy occurred after a second flight; the personal romance is wholly fictional.)

not trust me. It is the sixteenth of November. I shall get the royal permission to make this experiment of flight on the 21st. Do you wish to accompany me?"

"You? Do I wish— Why, I must! I must!" broke out Rozier. "Do you hear? I must!"

The Marquis eyed him cynically.

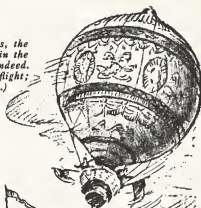
"To a man of my age, only one thing matters; the future. To a young man like you, only the present matters. Well, then! You need either help, money or friendship; I offer all three at your service."

The blue eyes of Rozier softened and warmed. "Arlandes, you're kind, but I can't accept for your own sake. It would mean peril, risk, disgrace—even the Bastille."

"Ah! An offence against royalty!" Arlandes became animated. His eyes twinkled anew. "Good! We've risked the air together, now let us risk the hospitality of the King! You mean to brave his anger?"

"No. His brother's enmity," said Rozier gloomily.

"Ha! Admirable!" And the Marquis positively sparkled with interest. "The Comte de Provence, eh? Monsieur, as he's known to the world. My dear Pilatre, this dissolute, icy-hearted, in-



effectual and effeminate Monsieur is probably the most contemptible person in France. He and his friend and confidant Baron Romain, are arrant rascals. A man is to be judged by his enemies; I congratulate you! Now I insist upon helping you, upon sharing your risks. Tell me your troubles!"

"Rather, my ambitions." Pilatre de Rozier, yielding, threw out his hands in resignation. "Very well. I've warned you! But this is no time or place to talk. Let facts speak for me. Meet me at eight o'clock this evening, if you wish to know everything. Our destination is the house of Louise de Sancy, which fronts on La Muette park."

"I'll call for you at eight, in my coach," said the Marquis. "Eh? Going now?"

"An appointment with my banker," said the younger man.

He rose; they shook hands and parted. Rozier strode away. Arlandes sank back in the chair and looked after him, with a shake of the head.

"So she's nipped him!" he muttered. "Poor devil. He deserves a better fate. Even if she is the most beautiful woman in Paris—"

IN Paris, in France, perhaps in the world!

A glittering, facile beauty, warmed and toned by the mellow glow of the countless wax tapers—so many tapers that two wigged and powdered footmen had full-time work in tending them. She, in her flowered brocade and pearls, was a dream of beauty, as the soft glow lit her face and figure that evening, and the violins throated soft music in the alcove, and about her like butterflies flitted the nobles and ladies of the court. She was heir to beauty and wealth and a great name, and she had cast aside conventions to enjoy life's fullness.

Arlandes saluted her in his gay, bored, casual way, murmuring the most flagrant flattery as he bowed above her slim fingers, which a thousand other lips had kissed. Rozier came, and her eyes quickened; eager laughing eyes, lips half parted, exquisitely chiseled features all aglow. The young man kissed her fingers, and she spoke, softly.

"In half an hour; the little gold salon."

His eyes swept her, and all his heart, his soul, in them. Her voice lifted; she called others. Here was Pilatre de Rozier, of whom all the world spoke! Rozier, who had ascended above Paris in that queer bag of smoke!

The rooms buzzed. Rozier was at once the center of all interest. Arlandes, who had also ascended in the balloon, stood back with a cynical twist of his thin lips, disregarded.

The world of Paris, like most of the outside world, had suddenly gone air-mad. In June the balloon had been invented by the Montgolfier brethren: a huge bag of hot air that soared into the sky and came down again. Animals had been carried up. Then along came the Charles brothers, with an alleged improvement—a rubber varnish that would make the cloth bag hold hydrogen gas, fourteen times lighter than air. Their bag had soared too.

Everyone rushed to the new toy. An enormous bag was fabricated, by Montgolfier, gayly decorated and adorned with the royal cipher; in this, attached to long ropes, Rozier had mounted, Arlandes had mounted—and lived to tell the tale! They had even kept it in the air, by burning straw as the inside air cooled, and sending it up again as it sank.

Silly fashion was balloon-crazy. Head-dresses, gowns, ornaments—everything was after the manner of balloons. Each ascension of the captive bag drew people by thousands. The air was conquered, said everyone; soon men would be able to ascend. Even the American envoy, Dr. Franklin, religiously attended every such affair; and the craze was said to be spreading to England and even America.

Small wonder that Louise de Sancy seized on the fad and made the most of it. She was too much of an aristocrat to receive the attentions of the police; not enough of an aristocrat to receive the attentions of the court. But the lower fringe of the court glittered around her beauty like moths, and some died like singed moths, unregarded. Licentious nobles, soldiers, prelates, fine ladies—her salons were all the rage among those who liked the turn of a card or the fall of the dice.

ROZIER was mad about her; he was impetuous about everything, as his ardent eyes and glowing features testified—a straight, commanding nose, thin nostrils and mobile lips, and fire in the gaze. As he waited, he trembled with the consuming emotion that mastered him. He was alone in the little gold salon, at the end of the long hall.

It was a delightful place, the walls paneled in golden brocade, a buhl escri-

toire and a couple of chairs, doors at the end opening upon the cool heavy-scented conservatory, where the odor of moist earth mingled with that of flowers, and thick green fronds mounted the imitation rock walls. Then she came, with a swish and a light step and a waft of perfume, hands outstretched, a smile of intimate greeting going to his heart.

"Do you know that you're the lion of Paris?" she exclaimed gayly. "Ah, Pilatre! You never looked so handsome! Everyone's talking about you, about your daring, to venture up into the air!"

"That takes no daring," he laughed.

She shuddered a little. "Ah! Terrible! But there are more dangerous places, my dear; this is one. I warned you not to come tonight. He is coming; he'll be here any minute!"

"To the devil with him!" said Rozier. "Look! I brought you something, dear Princess of Beauty! As I was up in the air, higher even than the towers of Notre Dame, I looked down into Paris and saw a jewel; and here it is for you, with my heart and love."

She took the morocco box he handed her, and opened it. A cry of delight trembled on her lips; with the abandon of a child, she flung herself into his arms. He held her close, but her quick impulse died, and she rescued herself from his eager kisses.

"My powder—my patches— Oh, but it's beautiful, Pilatre!"

There was a good deal of the child about her, in fact. And about him was something tender and gracious, as though she appealed to some oddly feminine quality in him—oddly, because to all seeming he was very masculine. Perhaps it was because he was so masculine that her infantile, witless beauty called to him. She was all one thing this moment, all another thing the next, capricious and volatile.

She took the pin from its box and held it up, admiringly. A lovely creation of pearls, shimmering and fragile.

"Fasten it for me! Here!"

He came close, stooped a little; his breath came faster as his fingers fumbled. She was close and fragrant, her bosom beneath his lips; he kissed her swiftly, passionately. She seemed about to yield, when she caught a step at the door and drew away swiftly. One of the footmen came in with a low word.

He had come—the King's brother!

"My dear, my dear, you must go!" she breathed, catching at Rozier's arm,



"My dear, you must go!" she breathed.

with quick terror leaping in her eyes. "Promise me, for my sake, for my sake! Think what it would mean to me, if you had any trouble! Remember, the Baron will be with him."

Rozier stiffened imperceptibly.

"Very well," he said gravely. "For your sake, then. When shall I see you?"

"In four days," she said. "On Monday. Here, at four. And tell me quickly! Are you going to travel in the air? I hear the King has forbidden it."

"He will permit it," said Rozier. "Yes. Will you come to see us ascend?"

"Of course! All Paris will come. On Monday, then; at four."

A hasty touch of her lips, and she was gone, leaving the young man radiant with joy.



The Marquis d'Arlandes slipped into his greatcoat and walked away, humming a light tune as he went.

Something moved in the conservatory, from which several openings gave upon the larger rooms beyond; a step sounded; a resplendent figure appeared. It was Arlandes, in his colonel's uniform and epaulettes. He nodded unconcernedly.

"So! I thought you might be here. The royal gentleman has come, and his damned soul, Baron Romain."

Rozier scarcely heard the words.

"Arlandes, she's an angel!" he exclaimed ecstatically. "An angel! I promised her I'd leave at once and avoid trouble. She's the very soul of innocence and purity; she doesn't know what it means to have those rascals under her roof."

"Wonderful!" The Marquis regarded him with ironic admiration. "If I could be you for one month, I'd give half my estates!"

"Eh? You mean, you love her also?"

"God forbid!" said Arlandes devoutly, and he was not noted for his devotion. "Shall I deal you the blow? Reason argues against it; you'd hate me on the

Illustrated by
L. F. Grant

spot, and you'd believe nothing. Yet if I don't, another will, and with less mercy or love for you."

"What the devil are you talking about?" demanded Rozier with a bewildered air.

The Marquis took a pinch of snuff, deliberately. "You should hear the tongues clacking in there, the click of gold on the board!" said he. "Your name is everywhere. You're the talk of Paris. You wish to fly, and the King refuses to permit such mad folly. My dear fellow, you're the rage, the craze!

If you fly, it's said you'll go to the moon, vanish in the heavens, crash to earth and break your neck—or catch fire and burn up, you and the bag together. Naturally, then, you're the most famous person in France at this moment. Like the fabled Dædalus of Greece, the first man to fly in the air, your name will go down the ages as the first man who did, in fact, take flight!"

Rozier's brow knitted. "Stuff and nonsense," he said sharply. "And you know it."

"Of course. But this, my dear Pilatre, is what she sees in you. Not the man, but the figure. She borrows luster from you. Jealousy is provoked in others—richer, greater than you. She urges you to the flight, to the wild burst of fame and glory—"

Now Rozier, who had become very pale, suddenly broke in upon the sardonic words.

"Enough! Don't dare utter such things!" he exclaimed in a tense, hard voice. "I know you're jesting, playing with me, in your bitter disillusioned way. If I thought you were serious, I'd kill you here and now."

The Marquis eyed him attentively, and nodded. "Yes; I believe you would." He broke into his quick, charming smile. "Forgive the jest, my dear Pilatre! I meant no harm, be assured. I'll say no more."

He extended his hand. Rozier grasped it, relaxed, hesitated.

"Why," he asked, "should you say such things, even in jest? There must be some basis for your words, some thought in your heart, some misconception of her. Tell me what it is, frankly! Tell me, so I can show you the truth about her."

"No, no!" exclaimed Arlandes. "You wear a sword; you might carry out your threat."

KEENLY Rozier's gaze searched his face. "We're friends. I'd like you to respect her as I do. Tell me!"

"The devil! You'd put all my good resolutions to flight?"

"If it would help, yes." Rozier smiled. His court suit of sky-blue velvet trimmed with silver was very becoming. It lent him a boyish air. "You've heard gossip about her?"

"That's it, yes." The Marquis nodded, not without relief. "Even the Sancy wealth cannot provide such entertainment as is here found, such a life as she lives. So,

it's said, she profits by the gaming here; And the vile tongues of rumor, touching on the protection given her by Monsieur, on her friendship with Baron Romain—well, you can guess that it has all disturbed me, since learning your secret. You're not angry with me for saying it?"

ROZIER was angry, yes, but his anger had been disarmed.

"Gossip and rumor, vile scandal of idle envy!" he said slowly. "You should know better than to believe such things of her. That Baron Romain is a specter of evil, that he pursues her, I know very well; she is in bitter fear of him. But because he's the friend and confidant of Monsieur, she has to make the best of it."

"She's in fear of him!" repeated Arlandes, as though stupefied.

Rozier nodded.

"Yes. She's told me so. She wants no trouble between us, therefore. I'm going to take her out of all this, away from Paris, to England perhaps. In a few weeks, do you understand? We go together, she and I. There! Now do you believe me?"

The Marquis swallowed hard, and again grasped his hand, warmly.

"My dear fellow! I believe you absolutely, implicitly! Forget my words, my crediting this scandalous gossip. If you say she's an angel, then I'll swear to the fact. Even," he added with his cynical twinkle, "if the Holy Scriptures make no mention of female angels."

Rozier smiled. "Good. Wait here—I'll find a footman and have him bring our things."

He strode into the conservatory and vanished. Marquis d'Arlandes rolled his eyes to heaven and exhaled a deep breath.

"God forgive me, I didn't have the heart to go through with it!" he muttered. "Angel of innocence and purity—save the mark! She's playing him against Romain, of course. Not to mention Monsieur, who's probably tired of her by this time. Romain's an adventurer and a rogue, an Italian who's insinuated himself into the friendship of Monsieur. It's very lucky that these vile scandalous tongues never linked my name with that of the fair Louise! Faith, I played in luck and no mistake, that time! It's a damned shame that she should have trapped the boy—"

He broke off, listening; a startled expression leaped into his face. He stepped quickly into the conservatory, then came to a halt, and bowed.

Before him, closed in by the flowers and greenery, Rozier stood facing two glittering figures. The one, Monsieur, a man still under thirty, handsome in the Bourbon way. The other, Romain, a gaunt, dark-eyed man, decorations blazing on his brocade vest, his swarthy features marked by jutting nose and jutting chin, a smolder in his dark gaze.

"Ha! You, Arlandes!" exclaimed Monsieur. "What are you doing here?"

The Marquis bowed again, respectfully. "Assisting M. de Rozier," he said with deliberate challenge. Then he smiled and added: "Assisting him, I should say, to fly to the moon, Your Highness!"

Monsieur, not certain whether he were being mocked or flattered, grunted and looked at Rozier.

"You're an impertinent fellow," he said. Obviously, there had been some passages of words. "It does not please me to see you in this house. Is the hint sufficient?"

Rozier bowed. "Your Highness! Your word is my law. I regret that no one informed me you had purchased this property."

The lips of Arlandes twitched; the Prince became pale with anger. Romain spoke, with a subtle sneer.

"Luckily for M. de Rozier, His Majesty has forbidden his proposed journey in the air, for it would assuredly end in the moon!"

"Enough!" struck in Monsieur haughtily. "You are excused, M. de Rozier."

The young man, livid, bowed and turned.

Arlandes flung him a word.

"Wait for me in the coach. I have a request to proffer His Highness."

ROZIER departed. Monsieur shot the Marquis an angry look.

"You, M. le Marquis? A request?"

Arlandes bowed again. "The presence of that young man, Your Highness, is, shall we say, inconvenient? He is ardent, impetuous, headstrong. Now, he is resolved to journey through the air; His Majesty has forbidden it. But I have certain influences at work, and if Your Highness would graciously speak a word in the King's ear, permission might be given to make the flight."

Monsieur's petulant features darkened. "Why the devil should I help the rascal?"

"Oh! Why not—since he'd certainly end in the moon?" Arlandes waved his lace handkerchief airily. "Or else with

a broken neck. The quick wit of Your Highness will perceive—"

"Ha!" exclaimed the Prince. "Upon my word, an excellent idea! Let the fellow do it, eh? Yes, yes! I'll speak to my brother in the morning. Excellent, excellent!"

A LIGHT step, a peal of laughing welcome; Louise de Sancy appeared. The two saluted her; she curtsied to Monsieur, accepted his arm, and departed with him, looking into his eyes and laughing gayly. Baron Romain glanced after them, speculatively, darkly.

"You are not, by any chance, jealous of the blood royal?" came the mocking voice of Arlandes.

The Baron swung around quickly.

"You address me, M. le Marquis?"

"La, no!" Arlandes waved his handkerchief again. "I address myself, my poor unworthy *alter ego*—" He broke off, as his handkerchief flipped the Baron's face. "A thousand apologies! Ten thousand, my dear Baron—" His hand, this time, slapping the swarthy features hard. His mocking voice went on. "Oh! A hundred thousand, by all means!"

And once more his fingers lashed. This time, a ring on his hand drew blood.

Romain stepped back, hand on sword, a murderous expression convulsing his face. Words drove from him in fury.

"You'll answer to me for that! You'll answer tomorrow!"

"Impossible, my dear Baron!" Arlandes dusted his uniform lapels. "I'm on duty for the next four days—until noon of the fourth day, to be exact—at the palace. At noon of Monday, then, I'm free. Shall we say sunset of Monday, in the little park of the Bois by the Neuilly gate?"

"There are laws against dueling," snapped the Italian, wiping a drop of blood from his cheek.

"Yes, assassination would be safer," the Marquis rejoined, with a pert nod. "Within half an hour, however, all the world will know how you got that scratch. So you might find assassination unwise. You might have the police on hand to interfere with our rendezvous; in that case, all Paris will know you for a poltroon, a coward, and in fact the arrant rascal that you really are! No, my dear Baron; meet me alone, on the Monday. You have no other course, I assure you!"

Laughing, he departed, humming a gay air.



"Jump!" said Arlandes, and leaped. But the balloon, swinging down, enveloped Rozier.

Baron Romain actually had no choice in the matter. Italians were not loved; favorites of Monsieur were not loved; unless he did precisely as he was told, he could well imagine himself hissed out of France. Being an adept at fencing, however, Baron Romain speedily recovered his good humor; to do him justice, he was no coward at all. . . .

Two days later the news broke like a bombshell over Paris; the King had given his consent to the experiment! The Marquis d'Arlandes had permission to attempt an aerial voyage in the new Montgolfier balloon; and Pilatre de Rozier was going with him, being expert in handling the bag of smoke!

The Academy of Sciences was to oversee the experiment, with Dr. Franklin and others in nominal charge. From royalty down to the gutter was a fever of excitement. If a mere gas-bag soaring in the air could stir the imagination of everyone, the idea of men going into the air with that bag conveyed a supreme thrill.

Arguments raged. They would disappear forever; they would conquer the realm of the air; they would break their necks. Montgolfier gave the use of the balloon, but said the thing was perilous. . . . Discussions raged near and far. Amid it all, Arlandes remained cool and aloof: he was on duty; therefore all arrangements were in Rozier's hands.

On the Monday morning, early, Rozier sought him out, blazing with eagerness.

"My friend! It's all arranged. The balloon's being installed now!"



"Where?"

"In La Muette park, just opposite her house."

The eyes of Arlandes flew wide with astonishment, then twinkled.

"Name of the devil! You're serious?"

"Of course," said Rozier. "The police are keeping an open space for the Academy, the court; your regiment is to be on guard and keep the crowds back. The first men in the air—do you understand? Dependent on the weather, of course."

"Good!" exclaimed the Marquis, laughing. "You'll be in charge; you're the

captain. I'll be crew, and stoke the fires. I insist! My dear fellow, it's the first chance in my life to do something useful. Don't deprive me of the honor. By the way, have you seen her again?"

"No. I've been busy. I'm to see her at four this afternoon."

The eyes of the Marquis sparkled; his thin lips twisted with ironic humor. Suddenly Rozier turned to him, recollecting.

"I've heard rumors of some trouble between you and Romain. Word's going around that you slapped his face. It's not true?"

"An exaggeration, I assure you," said the Marquis, who had himself spread those rumors. "I flicked his face with my handkerchief, and apologized for it."

"Really?"

"Upon my word of honor."

"Oh! I'm relieved; I heard a blow had been given." Rozier brightened. "If that jackal intrudes upon me again, I intend to chastise him myself."

"I thought you would," said the Marquis. "I shall expect the honor of serving as your second, when the time comes. When do we start for the moon?"

"Tomorrow noon, if that suits you."

So agreed. Rozier posted off to the Muette gardens, and for the rest of the day had his hands full; he was, as predicted, the most famous person in all Paris. Buoyant, gay, alive with eagerness, he saw to every preparation himself, was cheered by the crowds, already gathering, and by the many notables who came to watch the proceedings.

At four o'clock he borrowed a riding-coat, crammed a hat over his eyes, got through the masses of people unrecognized, and made his way to the house opposite the park. A lackey admitted him and took him to the little gold salon, to await Louise de Sancey.

And there the destiny which Arlandes was trying so carefully to avert, or at least to postpone, overtook him.

WITH the wan sun quivering at the horizon, Arlandes left his coach in the Bois and walked briskly to the little park near the Neuilly barrier. The evening was cool but clear. Among the trees he found Baron Romain pacing up and down. The Baron turned to him as he approached, with an impatient word.

"M. le Marquis, this is all absurd. Even by the code, it is illegal without seconds—"

"You're right," broke in the Marquis. "But it's the height of wisdom, not of

folly, my dear Baron. Seconds are witnesses to what's a crime in the eyes of the law. As it is, we're alone; no one is in sight—we may kill each other with impunity."

"A truce to your jesting," exclaimed Romain savagely. "I've no desire to kill you!"

"But I, M. le Baron, have a most damnable determination to kill you!" Arlandes threw off his greatcoat, threw off coat and vest, and drew his sword. "Ready?"

"Then, you fool, you'll be the one to perish," said Romain. "*En garde!*"

The blades clicked. . . .

In a matter of minutes—three, to be exact—the Marquis d'Arlandes donned his waistcoat and coat, slipped into his greatcoat and walked away briskly, humming a light tune as he went. At this hour, the spot was quite deserted. It was even more deserted, in fact, than when he had arrived.

TWO hours later Arlandes knew the worst. He sat staring at Pilatre de Rozier—wordless, deeply alarmed in his cynical soul; yet in a way relieved that the crisis had come and gone again.

Rozier was pale as death itself; he had aged ten years; his dress was disheveled; his blue eyes looked stricken.

"It was for this!" he mumbled. "It was for this! For this I gave her everything, money, honor, loyalty, devotion!"

"I comprehend that your eyes have been opened," said Arlandes, rallying. "But I don't understand why. Who told you? Not she herself, surely?"

A bitter laugh shook the younger man.

"She herself, yes! I was waiting in the gold salon; there was a letter half-written on the *escritoire*. Her own writing. I did not mean to read it, but a name caught my eye; I could not help myself; it drew me like an accursed magnet! Dishonorable? If you like. It matters not. A letter to Baron Romain. It told me everything; what no one would have dared to utter in my presence—everything! Now I must find Romain tonight and kill him."

"Ah!" murmured Arlandes, brightening. "Decidedly, my efforts have not been wasted, after all!"

"What did you say?" asked Rozier.

"My efforts are all to help you, my dear Pilatre. I have news. Some one told me, as I was on the way here, that Romain was just found dead, supposedly in a duel. No details. To tell the truth,

I feared you might have been responsible."

"Dead!" echoed Rozier dazedly, and wet his lips. "Romain—dead!" He stared at Arlandes. "You knew all this, about her! You tried to tell me!"

"Yes," replied the other simply. "It's no secret. She loves no one; she's incapable of love, an infinitely shallow and superficial person. Now let me advise you to dine well, drink deeply, and think on the morrow. We'll dine together. The Dauphin of France, the child who'll one day be king, is to see us off tomorrow! No protests; silence, I beseech you, commend yourself to my hands! The future is all wrecked, yes; but remember that I depend on you to manage that accursed balloon tomorrow." . . .

Noon. A vast, surging crowd, tumultuous and hoarse, massed outside the lines of soldiers that kept the Muette gardens clear. Inside, nobility, ladies of the court, the little Dauphin himself; members of the Academy watched from the terrace of Dr. Franklin's house in near-by Passy. The balloon, a huge gaudy thing decorated with gay bunting, the wicker basket poorly balanced, tugged at its mooring-lines.

Rozier, stripped to his shirt, worked like a madman, and Arlandes helped. Packets of straw were fed into the iron pan whose funnel carried the hot air into the bag above. Suddenly a gust of wind doubled over the bag. There was a ripping noise. Rents appeared.

Women to the rescue! Fine court ladies rushed to aid; pins and stitches closed the rents. Rozier worked harder. An hour of delay, and all was ready once more. Trumpets blew; drums rolled.

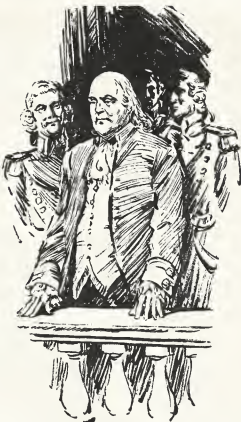
"Cast off everything!" shouted Rozier.

The ropes were cast off. The great bag rose; Arlandes, waving his lace handkerchief to the crowd, saw the whole mass of people dumb with awe and wonder. The balloon hung in air, and Rozier cried out savagely:

"You're doing nothing! Get to work! We're not going up!"

"Pardon," said the Marquis, and put up his handkerchief. "Look! There's no motion—the earth is moving; we're standing still!"

He plunged at the task, stuffing straw into the iron fire-pan. Bunting and decorations hung all around, closing him in. More straw, and more, until Rozier was satisfied. Then, joining his companion, Arlandes looked down. The balloon was over two thousand feet up.



"What good is a newborn child?"

"We're moving—look!" he cried, excitement banishing his weary boredom. "There's the Oise and Conflans! I recognize St. Denis, St. Germain! And directly under us, is the Visitation!"

"Also the river," responded Rozier, who, worn and haggard, showed no elation, no excitement. "Fire! More fire!"

They both pitched in this time, shaking out the straw to make it burn better. The bag mounted, stayed high. They paused for observations.

"We started to cross the river, but we're not crossing," exclaimed Arlandes. "Look! We're moving along the river. . . . What's that?"

The bag above them emitted a ripping snort, and another. Arlandes darted to the other side, looked upward and called sharply. Rozier joined him, and he pointed to half a dozen holes in the bag.

"More straw," said Rozier with perfect calmness, and fell to work.

Again they mounted. Now the fitful wind changed, swept them hither and thither; they drifted across the very roofs of Paris, mounted once more, and then began an inexorable descent. The holes were increasing in number; the bag was coming apart at the bottom.

Down and down—ahead, open country, windmills, trees. They were coming down, but not rapidly.

"Ready to jump for it," said Rozier, and climbed to the edge of the wicker basket, holding by the cordage. Arlandes, on the opposite side, to keep the basket balanced, did the same. The ground swept nearer; the movement was slow, majestic; there was no danger.

"Jump!" said Arlandes, and leaped.

The basket was almost touching the ground. He did not even fall to the earth, but—recovering balance, turned. A cry broke from him.

The balloon had leaped up, with his weight gone; and it had turned over, the bag swinging down and doubling, enveloping Rozier and hiding him from sight. For Rozier had failed to jump.

The bag doubled farther. Then, like a plummet, bag and basket suddenly rushed at the ground. Smoke went up from the débris; the thought of fire in his brain, Arlandes leaped for the ruins, stamped out the straw, kicked aside the firepot, frantically called Rozier.

He pulled his companion clear at last—only to lower him gently to the earth and to support on his arm the dying head.

The blue eyes flickered open and met the pitying, anguished gaze of Arlandes.

"What no one—ever did before!" faintly murmured Rozier. He smiled. "After all, I still love her. Tell her—"

His voice fluttered out. Still smiling, his eyes settled steadily upon vacancy.

After a moment, Arlandes came to his feet and drew his greatcoat over the battered figure. He made the sign of the Cross. A sigh, a deep breath, shook him.

"Too brave, too noble, too devoted!" he said sadly. "No wonder the gods were jealous."

UPON the terrace of Dr. Franklin's house in Passy, the gentlemen who were watching the balloon drift from sight turned to their host with a burst of excited comments. One voice was lifted in frank scorn.

"What's the use of such things? I ask you, monsieur, what good are these balloons?"

Dr. Franklin regarded the speaker a moment; then he smiled his gentle, ineffable smile.

"My friend, I answer your question with another. What good is a newborn child?"

Another vivid story of this "Men in the Air" series will appear soon.

LADY

The ninth dramatic tale in "Trumpets from Oblivion"—stories based on the reality of old legends.

THE day that I shared in one of Norman Fletcher's experiments, or rather watched him at work, gave me a brutally shocking experience that I have no desire to repeat.

Our Inventors' Club, before which Fletcher had been demonstrating what he termed his "Trumpets from Oblivion," had disbanded for the summer. That day I drove out to the Pan-American laboratories on a business errand. Some one mentioned that Fletcher had been ill, and I looked him up. I found him at work in his private office, and he received me with hearty acclaim.

"Come in, come in! Make yourself comfortable; I'm glad to see you. I've had a touch of flu but it's over now, and I'm taking things easy."

"If you're busy—"

"I'm not! In fact, I'm about to play around with my pet invention, so you're just in time to sit in on an experiment and name the subject. Half a minute, now, till I finish these notes, then we'll go at it."

As I waited, it was with a self-conscious feeling. Here was a famous man, hailed by the world as an electrical genius, heir to the wizardry of Steinunetz and of Marconi, placing himself and his time and skill at my service! His affability, his friendship, were genuine. My heart warmed to the old Yankee, with his bushy snow-white hair, his ruddy features, his shrewdly twinkling eyes.

My thoughts flickered back over his odd theory, that all the old myths and legends of the world invariably had a basis of fact. He had proven this theory, too, with the astonishing apparatus he had invented, comprising his researches in ultrasonic waves, light waves, and other little-known and untrodden paths of physics. In recalling light and sound, which never die, in bringing back scenes from the past with what I can only de-

of the EVIL EYE

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Gervase, marked for death, meant to take full toll before dying.



scribe as a sort of backfiring television, he had amazed everyone. Unperfected though his invention was, it was none the less a thing of rank magic to me.

"Ready? Come along to the laboratory," he exclaimed cheerfully. "Now I can relax for the day. Have you thought of some subject you'd like to probe?"

"Along the line of your myth theory?" He chuckled. "Trumpets from oblivion, eh? Yes."

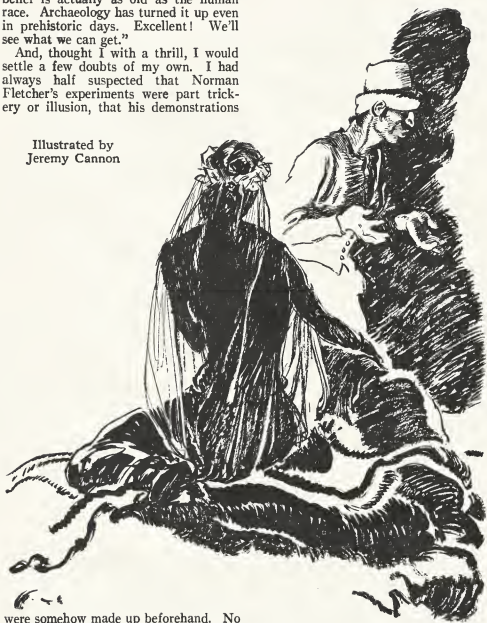
"Well," I said, "do you suppose we could learn anything about the origin of the evil-eye notion?"

"The evil eye?" He ruffled a hand through his white hair. "You've certainly picked something there! That

belief is actually as old as the human race. Archaeology has turned it up even in prehistoric days. Excellent! We'll see what we can get."

And, thought I with a thrill, I would settle a few doubts of my own. I had always half suspected that Norman Fletcher's experiments were part trickery or illusion, that his demonstrations

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon



were somehow made up beforehand. No chance for that here.

"Remember," he said, as we came into his gaunt laboratory with naked granite walls, "you'll have the language problem to cope with. We can't understand the words used in the dim far past; I'll have no opportunity to translate them into English and synchronize the speech. Now, make yourself at home and we'll get to work."

I dropped into one of the easy chairs, and took a cigar from the box on the table. Fletcher seated himself before the keyboard, no larger than an organ manual and not unlike one in appearance,

from which he controlled all his apparatus; there was none in sight, but I knew it must be somewhere about the place.

Under the touch of his finger, the room lights dimmed. Fletcher had never explained his invention, had never discussed how it worked. Now he gave a mere hint, which was quite incredible had it not been justified by results.

"We never know what we'll pick up, while fishing for the subject." He took a cigar, bit at it, and lighted it in his careful way. With it, he pointed to metal plates under his feet. "Conductors.

"Mansur," she said,
"see that Sir Ger-
vase, leaving, has
competent guides."
"I am not leaving,"
said Gervase.



I must obtain results by sending thought impulses into time and space—a difficult thing to explain, yet quite simple. You know, we're on the threshold of vast discoveries in the field of light, sound, invisible waves and impulses of all kinds. The little I've learned leaves me terrified and awed, I assure you."

"You can't mean that you produce these—these visions—with mental telepathy?" I blurted out. He smiled, then broke into a hearty laugh.

"No, and yes; the radiations of the brain, amplified and controlled—who

knows how far they reach? Not I. It was by accident that I stumbled on this one manifestation. For years, bacteriologists have been at work on much the same thing: One well-known scientist has made some surprising discoveries in the field of human radiation and in ultrasonic-wave phenomena; then there are the Russian and German investigations into ultra-violet and other invisible radiations of wave-lengths shorter than visible light, and so on. Such human radiations have been measured at two thousand angstrom units—"

He broke off abruptly, and I learned no more.

On the stone wall before us, where a golden glow of light was glowing, a huge and shapeless something now was crawling, palpitating, moving. Fletcher leaned forward to his controls, his fingers moving swiftly. The shapeless thing disappeared and dissolve. I heard Fletcher catch his breath.

"Too damned close!" he muttered. "That's the first time it's materialized on this side of the wall—careless of me! By the way,"—he turned his head, speaking casually to me,—"*I should add that human blood possesses this power of radiation, to a marked degree.*"

Where the light rested on the wall, the stones had vanished. As through a wide-open doorway, we looked upon another room. I knew that outside it was mid-afternoon of bright sunlight; yet this room before us was in night, lighted by a massive candelabrum on a table, and beside the table sat a veiled woman working at embroidery.

She was richly attired, jewels sparkled on her fingers, everything about the room conveyed an impression of luxury, of Oriental richness. Tapestries of Bagdad weave hung on the walls, the stone floor was thick with rugs, and above the empty fireplace were a pair of gold-damascened Arab scimitars, with an emblazoned Arab shield. One vaguely recalled that heraldry had started in the Orient and been brought to Europe by the Crusaders.

The veiled woman looked up. A door opened and an old serving-man appeared. At first his speech was without meaning; then it became intelligible. For he was speaking French—not the French of to-day, but old Norman-French. While to the eye this differs vastly from the present-day language, to the ear it was otherwise; not by any means clear and distinct, but not difficult to comprehend.

"**L**ADY ALIXE," said the old servitor, "a knight has arrived at the castle—an English knight, Sir Gervase of Cliffden. He landed at Acre three days ago and is on his way to Jerusalem. He has two Arab guides, and a letter to your father."

"Did you tell him," asked the lady, in a low, controlled voice, "that my father was killed by the Saracens last week?"

"I did, lady. He asks shelter for the night, and an interview with you."

"Did you tell him," her voice came more bitterly now, "that this is an evil place, that Lady Alixe of Beltran is an evil, murderous woman accursed by God?"

"God forbid, lady!" exclaimed the old man hastily. "Those things are not true. We know that you are the most beautiful and good—"

"Never mind," she broke in wearily. "Send the man here, when he has eaten. And send us wine."

The old servitor departed. The veiled woman resumed her embroidery. Her hair was massed in vivid gold; nothing of her face could be seen, but her fingers plying the needle were slim and young and lovely to see.

SUDDENLY all became clear, with these words, with the hints of the Orient all about. This Beltran was one of the numerous castles scattered about the Holy Land, held by the Crusaders or their descendants, before the Saracens expelled them. Lady Alixe was one of these transplanted offshoots of chivalry, fighting and dying in a far land for their faith, surrounded by a half-Arab environment. Her father slain, she held the castle in his place. But why the veil? Why was she not married? Was she young or old?

The door opened again. Into the room strode a man young, yet not young; he was ablaze with virility, a strapping, powerful figure in leather surcoat and chain shirt. His face, framed in shaggy black hair, was eager, dominant, masterful, its youth belied by harshness of sun and wind and suffering. To gain the Holy Land, in those days, one suffered much.

He fell on one knee before Lady Alixe and kissed her hand, and spoke.

"Lady, my father and yours were old comrades in arms; it grieves me to hear that your father, good Count Beltran, is no more. Here,"—and he produced a folded, sealed vellum,—"*is a letter the learned monks at Cliffden wrote for my father, introducing me.*"

"I thank you, Sir Gervase," she replied, taking the document and laying it aside. "Sit down, I beseech you; what little hospitality we have, is yours."

A servant brought in wine; he was a dark Arab who saluted the lady silently.

Gervase took a seat, gave her gossamer veil a curious glance, and spoke out impulsively.

"Let me remain here and serve you. No doubt you have need of a soldier, with things as they are, and more need of a friend. I'm in no haste to reach Jerusalem. No protests, I insist! We're old friends, or should be."

She glanced aside, startled, as a sound came at the door, a scratching sound. Gervase laughed and swung to his feet. "That's my friend Molitor—I picked him up at Venice, and he won't let me out of his sight. A stout fellow, and intelligent as the devil. You'll like him."

He jerked open the door as he spoke. A dog leaped in, a lean hunting shape of greyhound blood, who sprang on him with avid joy. "Down!" commanded Gervase, and went back to his seat. The dog stood looking around, and a change came over him.

His hackles rose, his eyes glared; he crouched to the floor and then came to Gervase and crouched again, fear and a fierce angry terror upon him. Gervase touched his head and he relaxed.

"What's got into you, Molitor? Nothing to fear here, old fellow."

"But there is," said Lady Alixe.

Gervase jerked up his head. "Eh?"

"The dog knows, what you do not know," she went on, sadness in her voice. "The dog knows what all the peasants know, what people all around me know, what is whispered through the whole land. God knows it is no fault of mine, but the lords of the kingdom at Jerusalem have threatened to burn me for a witch, and now that my father is gone, they may do it."

Gervase drained his flagon.

"Nonsense or madness, which?" said he angrily. "Are you jesting with me?"

"This veil is no jest," she said. "This is why I cannot accept your friendship or your offer of service, though I thank you with all my heart. This is why you must leave here in the morning."

"I will not," he rejoined curtly. "What's the reason, in God's name?"

"Ask Mansur, the Arab castellan who will take you to your room." She touched a bell. "And before he comes, let me give you an earnest of what he'll tell you. Here, Molitor!"

THE dog looked up, rose, came to her outstretched hand, sniffing. She lifted her veil so that he could look up into her face. Gervase, from one side, caught a glimpse of loveliness—but the dog suddenly shivered and sank down. Terror came upon him; an acute shiver seized him, and pitiful whines, until Lady Alixe leaned back again, and hid her face. Gervase looked on frowningly, perplexed, and the door opened to admit the Arab.

"Mansur, take Sir Gervase to the best chamber, give him all he desires, tell

him all he wishes to know," she said. "When he leaves in the morning, see that he has food and competent guides."

"I am not leaving," said Gervase, and stalked out of the room with the dog at heel, following closely.

MANSUR took him to a room in the tower, overlooking the countryside and the Arab village and the palm groves. When they were alone, Gervase turned to the dark man.

"Why does Lady Alixe wear a veil?" he demanded. "What is this mystery about her?"

"Lord, I will tell you," said the Arab. "But first, I pray you, give us aid; there's no time to lose. Sergeant Giles commands the garrison, for all the officers were killed with the Count, and he's a fool; no one knows what to do. You must take charge."

"What the devil are you talking about?" snapped Gervase, staring. "Your whole castle is at sixes and sevens—that's easy to see, and a worse-looking garrison I never beheld; but what's so urgent?"

Mansur dropped his voice. "We have not told Lady Alixe, my lord, but two men arrived just before you, knights from Jerusalem, seeking her. We've given them food and wine in a room apart and put them off with lies—for we fear they have come to kill her."

Sir Gervase crossed himself. "Before God, such madness I never heard! You're all mad here! You suspect noble knights of dastardly actions—"

"Lord, come and meet them yourself, but keep your sword-belt on," said the Arab. "All we ask is a man to lead us, in her service!"

Gervase, who had loosened his belt, buckled it again. "Show the way."

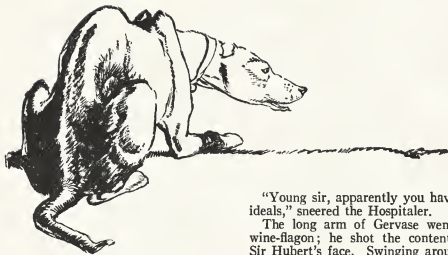
Molitor at his heels, he followed the Arab to another chamber, and strode in upon two knights at table, being served by their squires. They gaped at him. One, a stern scowling man, wore the mantle of a Hospitaller; the other was beefy, ponderous, sinister of eye.

"Who the devil are you?" demanded the latter.

"Sir Gervase of Cliffden, an English knight, in acting command of this castle," said Gervase. "I've just learned of your arrival, gentlemen. And you?"

"Sir Hubert Montjoy," the Hospitaller rejoined. "This is my companion, Sir Balthasar, a very worthy knight of Provence. We have orders from the King at

Lady Alixe lifted her veil—and the dog suddenly shivered and sank down, terror upon him.



Jerusalem; but whence came you? We knew of no knight left alive here."

"Live and learn," Gervase said curtly.

"Your business here?"

"Is with Lady Alixe of Beltran. Is she ready to receive us and hear our errand?"

"Let me hear it first."

Sir Balthasar came out of his chair, angrily.

"Ha! Some damned English adventurer just arrived!" His French was difficult to understand. "Out of this, rascal! We bear orders under the royal seal to take over command of this castle and send Lady Alixe to Jerusalem."

"Let's see your orders," said Gervase, stonily, and advanced to the table.

Montjoy drew a sealed packet from his pocket, and showed the dangling ribbon and seal.

"Does this satisfy your worship?" he said with a sneer. "Or have you fallen under the spell of her basilisk eye?"

"I fear, Sir Hubert, that I don't comprehend," Gervase replied. "Did you say 'basilisk eye'?"

"Certainly. All the world knows that Lady Alixe is accursed, that she possesses the Evil Eye which casts death and misfortune on all around. That's why she's to be burned at Jerusalem—after fair trial, understand."

"Oh!" said Gervase. "And you're eating her food and drinking her wine! You, who should be patterns of chivalry; you who have sworn to serve womanhood and protect it!"

"Young sir, apparently you have high ideals," sneered the Hospitaler.

The long arm of Gervase went to a wine-flagon; he shot the contents into Sir Hubert's face. Swinging around, he gave the Provençal a buffet that knocked him back into his chair.

"Is my meaning plain?" he demanded.

"You are recreant, traitor knights—"

"You damned fool, I'll have you flayed alive for this!" Montjoy, sputtering, hauled out his sword and stalked around the table. "You've resisted the royal authority—at him, men!"

THE two squires leaped up. Sir Balthasar was out of his chair again, roaring oaths. Gervase scraped his long steel out of the scabbard and perceived that the Arab had fled.

"Up, Molitor!" said he, and leaned forward to meet the sweeping, vicious attack of Sir Hubert. What followed, was sudden and terrible beyond words; for, with death all around him, the English knight could waste neither time nor motion.

He ducked low under Montjoy's blade, his sword swept out low and far. A squire came in with dagger drawn to stab him from the side, and his point ripped that man's throat open, even before Montjoy came to the floor, screaming, with a leg gashed off. Sir Balthasar was almost upon him, swinging a sword as ponderous as himself, and the other squire was darting forward with a hunting-spear in hand.

Molitor took this squire, leaping in upon him, gripping his throat and dragging him down with worrying growls. Gervase gave the point to the Provençal before the latter could strike a blow—gave it to him full and deep, piercing from midriff



to back and jerking his blade loose again. Ludicrous anguished surprise swept into the man's fat face, his sword dropped, he clutched at himself and fell atop the cursing, groaning Hospitaler, whose life was running out with his bloodstream.

"Off, Molitor!" shouted Gervase, but was too late to save the hapless squire, for the long jaws had torn out his jugular.

Gervase, leaning on his sword, stood shaking his head sadly at the ghastly scene. Sir Hubert cursed him and sank down in death. The Provençal was groaning his last.

"God rest them!" said Gervase, and wiped his sword. He was not callous at all, but death was very common in this day, life was cheap, and the man who could not kill quickly did not live long himself, except in servitude. Gervase had learned to kill, and so had lived.

He took the parchment from the table, opened it and eyed it curiously, being unable to read. He held it to a candle-flame, and was watching it burn when the door was burst open and Mansur came into the room, followed by a number of men-at-arms. Gervase turned to the silent, staring group.

"To my room with me, Mansur. You others, give these men burial and clean the room, and say nothing to the Lady Alixe."

Mansur accompanied him back to his own chamber. There he began to stammer something.

"Never mind about the dead men," cut in Gervase. "What's all this nonsense about Lady Alixe and the Evil Eye? Out with the truth, on your life!"

"Lord, it is no nonsense." The Arab shrugged and spoke resignedly. "As the wise men of my race know well, once in many generations is born a person whose

gaze holds the power of evil influence. Such a person is the Lady Alixe, not of her own will but by the will of Allah; who is man, to avert his destiny? Upon all who endure her gaze, falls misfortune or death. Animals of all kinds perish; children die or fall ill if she caresses them. The monk who served the castle took care of her last year when she was ill; he sickened and died. Many of those who served her have likewise died. Now she wears a veil, which lessens the power of the Evil Eye. Mind you, there is no harm in her! She is a sweet and gentle lady, and grieves bitterly for the harm she has done."

"So that's the explanation!" said Gervase. "Who is the overlord of this place?"

"It is held in fief direct from the King, at Jerusalem."

"Good; then no one will bother about those two knights, for a while at least. Waken me early. At sunrise, I want every man in this castle assembled in the courtyard. How many men-at-arms have you?"

"Barely thirty remain, Lord."

GERVASE flung himself down in the darkness, but not to sleep for a while. He was superstitious; the whole world was ridden by superstition. Yet he refused to accept this story of Lady Alixe and the Evil Eye. There might be some basis for it, yes, but it had been enlarged and aided by ill luck and evil mischance. So he dismissed it, resolving to test the matter for himself. Nor would he accept the testimony of Molitor, snorting in uneasy slumber beside him.

That he had come at the right moment to save Lady Alixe from harsh destiny, he saw quite clearly. His own destiny

had been abruptly altered; this killing of the two knights had changed everything for him. No Jerusalem now, no service with the King there!

"We'll think about the future when the time comes," he resolved, and fell asleep.

SUNRISE found him at work in the courtyard, inspecting, ordering, arranging, with a blaze of vigorous energy that swept everything before it. He was, in fact, appalled at what he found. Thirty men-at-arms, mostly French or of French descent, and fifty Greek mercenaries, in the main a slovenly lot. The castle was well supplied with food and wine, but arms lacked and defenses were slight. Below stretched a rich and fertile valley, with a large village and clumps of palms three miles distant; the villages and farmers were chiefly Arab and Syrian, he learned. Of horses, barely a dozen. The raid on which Count Beltran had perished had been disastrous in the extreme; the castle was an easy prey for the first band of Saracens to come this way.

Gervase took what measures he might. In the midst, he became aware of a veiled figure and the voice of his hostess.

"What, Sir Gervase, still here? I ordered you to depart this morning."

"Destiny ordered otherwise," said he. "I want you to ride with me to the village, yonder, and a bit farther."

She stiffened a little. "You talk as though you were master here!"

"I am," he said, regarding her steadily, trying vainly to pierce the thin veil. "It's my belief that I was sent here by God to save a very gentle lady from evil fortune; and I mean to do it. I've no patience with fools or rascals or silly childish nonsense. Suffer me to have my way, lady, since it's for your own good. I've found a mission in life, and intend to see it through."

His voice was resolute; so powerful was his air, that he dominated the whole place. As she hesitated, sudden interruption came.

Villagers had been streaming in at the open gates, bringing produce and fruits.

A wagon laden with oil-casks creaked across the stone, for the olives were in fruit and were being pressed. A man came to Lady Alixe and dropped on his knee before her, averting his face as he in barbarous French he said:

"Lady, there is sickness in the house of Mar Obed. Two children and the woman."

"Mar Obed has no children!" she exclaimed in surprise. "What woman?"

"A wandering Arab woman with two children, who came to the village yesterday on a dying horse. Mar Obed sheltered them; the woman was weak and ill, and is in no great peril, but the two children are dying."

"What does he say?" asked Gervase, and she repeated the words.

"We'll stop in and look at them," he said. "I have some skill with wounds and sickness. It's part of the knightly training; and God knows I've practiced it on many a poor soul since leaving England! Go and dress for the ride, Lady Alixe; I'll have out the horses."

With a gesture of helpless assent, she departed.

A little later they were riding down the cart-track toward the village, the two of them, with Molitor gamboling joyously around and ahead. Gervase wore his chain mail and a light steel cap; the sunlight well became his alert, strong features, saved from arrogance by the humorous wrinkles about his swift eyes.

"You're a very foolish man," she said softly, as they headed away from the castle. "Didn't Mansur tell you about me?"

"We'll discuss that later," he answered curtly.

"And the terrible thing you did last night. I heard the sounds as those men were being buried, and made Mansur tell me all about it. At least, all he knew."

DISMAYED, he checked his horse for a moment. His gaze went to her, keenly. In this instant he cursed the veil that hid her face.

"Then you know!" he exclaimed. "They had come to take over the castle, to send you to be burned as a witch. They tried to murder me. And you call it a terrible thing to defend my life?"

"I did not know," she said gently.

"Well, you do now. This land is no longer safe for me, or for you; now it's a matter of saving ourselves. If we had money, we could do it; money is power. But I've so cursed little. You probably have none."

She laughed. "Plenty, Gervase! My father has ransomed more than one Saracen. I have money and jewels at the castle; more is on deposit with a Genoese banker in Acre. What good is it to me? A woman alone is helpless."

"Ha!" His eye kindled. "You're not alone nor helpless, my lady."

"Hopeless, rather." Her hands made a fluttering gesture of futility, mournful as her voice. "What can I do? Nothing, accursed as I am! Better to let them take me, and end my life."

"Bosh!" he said roughly "I've got the thing through my head by this time. I'll make it plain later. There's a woman at home, in England, near Clifden; she lives in a hut in the woods. Goody Toad, they call her; she has the Evil Eye and is a witch. My father saved her from being burned, and she has told me all about it."

"About what?" she asked, as he paused.

"The Evil Eye. Something inside of her—a kind of power. If she stares at weak or sick animals, they die. But if she shuts her eyes and touches them, something goes out of her that cures them. People don't know this; they think she's wicked and accursed and can do only bad. Well, here we are at the village! Who's the man we seek?"

"Mar Obed. He's not an Arab but a Syrian. This is his house on the right."

They were among the houses, and Gervase noted a scattering on every hand. Mothers caught up their children and vanished hurriedly. Men drew back, although they saluted Lady Alixe humbly enough. One man hurriedly daubed his face and breast with a white powder. A girl, staring in fright, jerked a little box from her gown and scattered more white powder on her head and breast.

They dismounted at the door of Mar Obed. The Syrian, a bearded, bronzed man, saluted them, and Gervase noted that his bearded countenance, also, had been hurriedly strewn with the white powder. Lady Alixe talked with him, and turned to Gervase.

"He says the wandering Arab woman has been taken to another house, but the children are here; young children, fevered and dying. Go and see, if you like. I cannot. They would say that I looked on them and killed them."

"No, you're coming with me," Gervase replied. "Remember, your destiny is in my hands. I want you. Do as I say, lady, and trust me."

She moaned a little, but obeyed.

INSIDE the house, two children, dark-skinned and obviously Arab, lay on a pallet. The wife of Mar Obed, a kindly woman of middle age, was hurriedly dusting them with white powder, dusting her own face as well; she regarded Lady Alixe in abject terror.

The children, their little bodies drawn and emaciated, were muttering and tossing, looking about with fever-bright, uncomprehending eyes. Gervase examined them attentively, then asked for wine. Lady Alixe translated, and Mar Obed brought a cup of wine. Into it, Gervase put a few drops of liquid from a tiny phial.

"A fever remedy I got from a leech in Marseilles," he said. "Tell them to give it to the children later, a few drops at a time. Now lean over the bed and place a hand on each child."

She drew away. "No, no! You don't understand—"

"I understand better than you," he said gravely, compellingly. "Do as I say! Put a hand on each child, and close your eyes. Remain quietly until I give the word. If old Goody Toad had the right of it, we'll scotch this Evil Eye nonsense once and for all. Obey me!"

She was trembling violently, but yielded, and he placed one of her hands on the head of each child. A groan of fear came from the watching Mar Obed.

Gervase, regarding the two little ones keenly, saw a change come over them, and his heart leaped. The feverish tossing gradually ceased. The racing pulses quieted, the bright eyes closed. Presently they fell into peaceful slumber, breathing gently and easily.

"Enough." Gervase caught the hands of Alixe away. She staggered, and he supported her within his arm. "Ask them what this white powder is."

She did so. Mar Obed responded at length and showed a small box of the powder.

"He says," she translated, "that it's a powder used everywhere in the Arab countries, here and in Egypt and in Persia, as a protection against the Evil Eye. The greatest Arab wizards and doctors make use of it."

"Hm! Those Arab doctors are wise men," he rejoined thoughtfully. "I heard of them in Sicily; they positively work wonders. Ask him to give me some of the stuff."

Mar Obed complied readily.

Gervase tasted the powder, made a wry grimace, and tucked it carefully away. Then he strode out, handed Lady Alixe to her saddle, and mounted. Instead of heading back, he gestured toward the desert.

"Ride past the palms, out into the wilderness a way. I want to talk with you."

She assented in silence, and they rode on, with Molitor keeping company. The village and the palms dropped away. Amid untrodden sand, they came into a little hollow, a bowl whose edges rimmed the sky. Gervase drew rein, dismounted, and gave her his hand. As she came from the saddle, he caught swiftly at her veil and ripped it away.

TEARS sparkled on her cheeks, tears filled her eyes; she had been weeping as they rode. Despite the anger that now came into her face, it was very lovely. Her eyes were a bright and vivid blue. A proud face, touched with sadness and beauty ineffable.

"How dare you! How dare you!" she gasped. Gervase came to one knee, seized her hand, and brought it to his lips.

"Pardon, lady! But I had to see you as you are; your voice told me, last night, how beautiful you were. Your voice has filled my soul. The touch of your hand has been singing in my heart. Dear lady, don't you see the truth? It's like Goody Toad said—a power for good, not a thing accursed!"

"Oh, if I could believe it!" Her anger vanished, and anguished emotion filled her eyes. "Those children—they slept, they slept! My touch did them no harm! Yet it can't be true. If my eyes are accursed—"

"They're the most beautiful eyes in the world," broke in Gervase. "Listen! It's very simple, dear lady, just as old Goody Toad said. There's a certain power, yes; it can exert harm sometimes. That happened to you, perhaps once or twice, in little things; just as your vivid, bright eyes frightened Molitor last night. Then came exaggeration. Everything that happened was laid at your door. Tales spread and spread more wildly; fear lent wings to thought. You came to believe what was said. Others believed it. But now—you're looking at me, looking into my face. Does it harm me? No, by the saints! I ask no more than to meet the kindness and tenderness of your dear eyes all my life long!"

"Gervase! You are insane, mad!" she murmured. He laughed a little and once more pressed his lips to her fingers.

"Not at all; I'm utterly happy," he said, and rose, looking into her eyes. His sternly chiseled features were no longer harsh, but very gentle. "Look, dear lady! You've seen how this same power can heal, can do good. Here, let me prove it. Molitor! Here, you rascal!"

The dog came bounding to his side, caught sight of Lady Alixe, and shrank, stiffening.

"Close your eyes. Stoop down, touch his head," said Gervase, smiling. "Dogs read the eyes of humans, dear lady; it's a fact few people know. Do it, do it!"

She complied. Molitor shivered slightly at her touch, then quieted. As she stroked his neck, he lost his cowering air; after a moment, his head came around and he nuzzled her hand and licked it affectionately. She drew erect with a swift and startled word.

"True! It's true—oh, Gervase!"

Color swept into her cheeks, a rush of tears came into her eyes. She put out her hands to him, and Gervase upheld her, pressed her head against his shoulder, and his lips brushed the golden mass of her hair.

"What did you do to him—ah, the powder!" She shrank away, lifting her face in sharp conjecture. "Did you put that white powder on Molitor? Is that why he feared me not?"

Gervase broke into a laugh, but checked it thoughtfully.

"Heaven forbid! That powder, by the taste, is nothing but alum. Hm! There may be something to that powder, after all; these Arab wise men possess many secrets. This powder, that puckers the skin—hm! It might possibly fend off any such influences, in some queer way we don't understand. Bah! Sweep all that nonsense out of your head, my dear! From now on, we go up the world together. We'll abandon your castle and leave this land."

AS SHE listened, she yielded and drew against him, sobbing softly and happily, her face against his shoulder.

"We'll go to Acre," he went on, kindling to the thought. "There we'll take ship for Venice or Byzantium—perhaps to England; why not? The weight is off your heart and mind together. Here between sky and sand, you've come awake, you've learned the truth, you've cast off the darkness of your life. And I'll make the truth clearer to you, God helping me, through the years—"

His voice died away upon silence. A growl came from Molitor, a yapping angry bark; at the voice of Gervase, the dog subsided at his feet. Lady Alixe lifted her head and looked up, following the gaze of Gervase.

The rim of sand against the sky, above them, was broken by the shape of a



Gervase gave the point to the Provençal—full and deep, piercing from midriff to back.

horseman in glittering mail, who sat looking down at them. One low, incredulous gasp escaped the woman.

"Khalid! The Emir himself—Khalid of Damascus!"

As they looked, the rim of the bowl was broken all around. Men came into view, outlined against the blue sky, checking their horses silently; dark, bearded men in Arab chain mail, bows strung and shafts notched. Gervase relaxed. Caught, beyond escape! Caught, by swift savage raiders of the Saracen!

Lady Alixe moved swiftly. "I know him," she breathed. "He speaks French, he has often been a guest at our castle—Emir Khalid!" She lifted her voice in a clear, ringing call. "I'm the lady of Beltran! This knight is a friend—"

"It matters not who you are," broke in the Emir, a darkly indomitable, impassive shape. "I have sworn death to all Franks. It was I who slew your father Count Beltran. I shall kill every Frank I meet, for the injury that was done me last month, when my wife and children were carried off by Franks. Yield, both of you! Yield or die!"

Gervase scraped out sword. "Die like a man, then," he said grimly. White to the lips, Alixe tried once again.

"Khalid! We've done you no harm—"

"Take the woman alive," said the impassive Emir. "Kill the man. Shoot, Ali, and may Allah further your shaft!"

Alixe, who understood the Arabic words, flung herself before Gervase.

"No, *no!*" she cried fiercely. "They give no mercy—rather death, than a harem! Those infidel dogs shall not take me!"

Her long dagger flashed out in her hand. The Emir lifted his hand.

"Four of you, dismount and seize her. Ali, kill the man for me!"

Four of the Arabs dismounted; and of a sudden everything was happening at once. The bowman beside the Emir drew back his shaft. The four Arabs were plunging ankle-deep down the sandy slope. Gervase quickly stepped aside and put Alixe away from him with a shove. The bowstring twanged, and the shaft flew like a flicker of light.

LIGHTLY the sword of Gervase swung. It struck the arrow in mid-air and knocked it aside. The Arabs gasped; to them, it was magic. To Gervase, it was nothing; mere child's play, the everyday training of the straight-sworded Northmen and Normans.

Another twang, another flying shaft. He struck—and missed, losing balance in the sand. The arrow hammered on his mail-shirt. It broke, but the shock bore him back, overbalanced as he was, and he came down. To those who looked, it seemed that he was dead.

"Allah!"

With the shrill pealing yell, the other men dismounted and came rushing down the slope. The first four were already closing in upon Alixe, wolfishly.

She evaded one; her dagger struck out at another, but the man caught her in his grip. Molitor came up in one terrific leap and caught the Arab by the throat; but another, curved scimitar swinging, struck at the dog and killed him.

FOR that man, it was an evil moment.

Gervase was already coming to his feet; a cry of grief and fury burst from him as he struck. His blade clove through helmet and skull of the warrior, who pitched forward across the dead hound.

Alixe poniarded the man who held her. Then, smitten across the head by a mailed fist, she slipped down sidewise and lay quiet, senseless. The man who had struck her died, as the point of the long straight sword sheared across his belly; a spring, and Gervase was above her, bestriding her figure, feet planted firmly in the sand. He wasted no breath on battle-cries; he was marked for death and knew it, and meant to take full toll before dying.

They were flooding all around him now; they had left their bows with the horses, but steel was out and whanging at him. The first tried to rush him off his feet, but he met them halfway in this. He struck at their faces, swift and hard and fast; screams rang and blood spurted, for it was a ghastly business. The lithe curved blades were swept aside by the heavy sword; men staggered or reeled away from before him.

He leaped suddenly, turned about, caught those striking at him from behind. With point and edge he drove death into them, his tall figure towering above their lesser build. They pressed in for a moment. A Toledo blade slashed across his breast, piercing the chain-mail and bringing blood; another scimitar clanged on his steel cap, so that blood streaked down his cheek. Then they rolled back, as the smiting heavy sword struck down man after man, and blood spurted in the sunlight, and hurt men crawled, and screamed to Allah.

It could not last. He knew it most desperately; they were too many. Two came plunging at him, from either side. He cut down one, but his sword stuck there, and the other was in upon him, bearing him down. His sword was lost. His naked hands broke that man's neck, but already others were in, and he went down, down, slipping in the bloody sand, and they piled up above him.

"Back! Back, I say! Away from him!" The clarion voice of the Emir Khalid reached into them. The pile broke away. One warrior, poised to stab Gervase in the throat, was dragged off by his fellows. They scrambled clear, looking up in amazement to their leader. Gervase came to one elbow and reached out for his lost sword, but they did not move.

"Touch him not!" roared the Emir, swinging out of the saddle.

A man had come up to him, panting, gasping out eager words. In hot haste, the Emir turned and came down the slope in long leaps, and halted before Gervase. The latter came to one knee, sword ready, thinking it was the end, but the Emir checked him.

"Is this true?" The dark face was all ablaze, the eyes wildly alight. "Was it you, and this woman, who healed those children in the village? Answer, *answer!*"

"Aye," panted Gervase. "What of it?"

"My children, my children!" Reaching out, the Arab caught him in a wild embrace. "My wife, escaped from her captors with the two children! Allah bless you! Allah reward you, my friend and brother—"

THE hot gasping voices died out; the sunlight faded, the red gouts of blood were gone. The stones of the wall became visible once more. Then the experiment went wrong.

A cry broke from Norman Fletcher. Against the wall something moved. A wild bloody figure, holding a long ax, moved in front of us, came rushing at us—no picture, no vision, but some actual thing from the past. I saw Fletcher plunge at his keyboard, as the ax swung. It fell, missed him, struck a chair beside him—then it faded and was gone, with the crash of the blow still in our ears.

It was gone. The light was over, and died away. Fletcher came to his feet and looked at me; he was very pale and shaken. I looked at the chair. It was

rent and splintered by a tremendous blow; but the room was very quiet.

"Good Lord!" I cried. "Did I dream that thing—that ax?"

FLETCHER exhaled a deep breath, laughed shakily, and pointed to the chair. "There's your answer," he said. "Those controls went screwy on me—confound it! Well, well, all's right that ends right. Here, have a fresh cigar. Anyhow, you got the answer to your request for the Evil Eye material, eh?"

"More or less," I said, biting at the cigar. Right then, I needed a drink. "But I'm afraid I didn't get much of it. That alum stuff, for example."

He gave me a shrewd glance.

"No? To me, that was the most interesting detail of all," he observed reflectively. "We've just been told, flatly and unqualifiedly, that at the time of the Crusades, and presumably later, alum was used all over the Moslem world to avert the Evil Eye. Suppose we look this up and find it true,—and mind you, I've no doubt whatever that it will be substantiated in fact,—then what?"

"Well?" I said. "I'll bite. What?"

He shook his head. "There may be something in it from a scientific standpoint, that's all, directly in line with my own experiments. Alum, a powerful astringent, puckering the skin and membranes—yes, yes, it might have some such effect as we've been told. I've learned something today, let me tell you! Certain persons do emanate magnetic power, or invisible rays; science has proven that the Evil Eye is no mere fancy, but founded on sober reality. Once in generations, a person may show up whose radiations are extremely strong—for good or for evil. Hm! I'm going to experiment with the alum idea. Those old Arab physicians had something on the ball!"

Looking at the smashed and broken chair, I could not repress a shiver.

"So has your damned machinery, whatever it is!"

Fletcher took my arm, his shrewd eyes twinkling. "My friend," he said impressively, "come along to the library, where I'll lay before you the kindest words of tongue or pen."

"What are they?" I asked suspiciously.

"Scotch or Bourbon?" he rejoined, smiling.

"For once you're dead right," I said. "And the quicker the better!"

The Little Lame

Illustrated
by
Alfred
Simpkin



"More lies,"
cried Claire.
"Lies, lies
everywhere!"

SUPPOSE (said Dr. Richardley Coutts one evening on my veranda in Papua) there were an impossible, magical sort of store—half slave-market, half fairy-tale—where a man could go and look at samples of all the beautiful types of women in the world, set out behind crystal windows. And suppose some one like—say, Joan Crawford or Madeleine Carroll or Virginia Bruce, was in the window. (Yes, but it's a fairy-tale.) And suppose a man looked her up and down, her hair, her amorous mouth, her marvelous great eyes, and suppose he said to the chief wizard in charge: "That sample—but make me something just about twice as much so." And the wizard bowed, and uttered, "The customer is always right," or some such

magic spell; and suppose when he got home, there she was, sitting on the doorstep. . . . Not twice as tall, but taller; not twice as slender, but a bit slenderer; eyes even larger, lips even richer, more glamorous; a figure—

I thought of that, the first time I saw Claire. I told myself the fairy-tale. And then I wondered—and for half a year hardly stopped wondering—how it was that Bartholomew Lee had managed to snare, and keep, this marvelous peacock-butterfly.

THE surroundings were glamorous enough, even for her. Those out-of-the-way, almost unknown islands off the east coast of New Guinea are so extraordinarily beautiful that you can hardly

Ghost



*A South Seas
murder mystery*

**By BEATRICE
GRIMSHAW**

believe in them, the first time you see them; you think they're bits of stage scenery, but rather overpainted, floating loose. The floating effect is certainly there; the light in those latitudes, almost under the equator, is so brilliant that sky and sea combine in one pale blaze of pearl, with islands lying like

colored flowers dropped on a *Margaritifera* shell.

And palms. One knows what palms do to eye and mind—gracile deceiving creatures; like women. . . . And blue peaks. And the inevitable homestead with red roof, crying out among the green. And the white sand.

I was like other men, crazy about it all; new to it, young to it and the world. There was fever and dysentery; there were mosquitoes and leeches, crocodiles cruel as tigers, and far more dangerous; snakes, scorpions, centipedes, and blood-drinking ticks; natives who ate each other now and then, and knew how to stab with barbed spears up through a white man's bamboo floor. All that, behind the beauty and the romance. But these things sound, after all, much worse than they are; they give you something to boast about, when you "go South" on leave; they add pepper and spice to your life, when you are living among them. And there are no motorcars, no planes, no radio, no bridge-parties, nothing, in fact, to imperil or annoy, with the few unimportant exceptions outlined above.

All very well for me, a young Government doctor doing travel work about the marvelous eastern New Guinea archipelagoes; but in the life of Claire Lee, twenty-three or so, languorous, luxurious, and—as I have said—a peacock-butterfly for beauty, it seemed to me that there must be a good deal wanting.

A SIGNAL had been sent up for me as I passed the island in my launch—a yellow flag, which of course I answered at once. I was not very curious as to the cause of the summons. Lee had a mob of native laborers about the place, working his copra plantation; there might be a boy down with dysentery or beri-beri, or maybe a broken limb.

But when I had climbed the hot steep hill that led to the house (they always build houses on high hills in Papua, because it's cooler, and because men build while still young, and never dream they will grow older), I found Claire herself waiting on the veranda, looking sulky and alarmed at the same time, as a doctor's patients sometimes do; and beside her there stood a youngish good-looking woman whom I knew, sister of a planter on a neighboring island. Patient and patient's friend, I saw at a glance.

Emelyn Groves greeted me, Claire still sulking—and very beautiful she looked when she sulked, I thought. I reflected: "They should make her sulk three times a day before meals, just to add beauty to the world."

Emelyn said, smiling at Claire as one smiles at a sweet tiresome child: "It's too bad Mr. Lee is away again; I came over last week to keep Claire company, and this trouble of hers is really more

than I like to be responsible for, without him; so I asked Claire, and I put up the flag."

Claire said: "If we must talk nonsense, give Doctor Coutts a drink first."

I had my drink, and through the glass I secretly looked at Claire, and I saw that she was twisting her fingers, and turning her head about, and that she had tried to put on rouge, only of course the color wouldn't stay in that extreme heat, and it was running down her face in red tears. Nervous, I thought.

She reached for a glass, and poured herself a stiff whisky before she spoke again. After she had tossed it down, the way women do when they aren't accustomed to it, she said: "This kind friend of mine is worried because of—ghosts!"

That was something else altogether. I had expected—well, they had been married a year and a half; and Lee, I supposed, wanted children. As for Claire, I didn't know what her sentiments were, but she was woman, plus, to look at; and her children, if she had any, ought to have been, as the Irish say, "stone-breakers."

But there was no question of that. Apparently I had been sent for as if I were a priest who could exorcise—or a vermin-exterminator, who could smoke things out—in order to get rid of ghosts.

In the meantime—it was a pleasant house, with good food and drink, which matters much in the hungry New Guineas—and I was quite prepared, after the leisurely island fashion, to spend a day or so over an easy case of nerves or hysteria, with perhaps a little lecture on the impossibility of spirit manifestations, thrown in.

"WHAT seems to be the trouble?" was my first question, after the boys had come and taken the glasses away, and the two women, at my request, had set themselves down opposite me, with the light on their faces.

You could see the crudeness, the uselessness, of the paint that Claire had put on, as the pure blood under the skin suddenly sent waves of sunrise pink across her cheeks; swiftly as the pink had come, it faded, leaving her white beneath the streaks of red. She leaned a trifle forward, and said breathlessly: "A little, humped, lame man."

Now, I had had a stiff drink; I was in the company of two good-looking women; it was eleven in the morning, and a



"What's this about ghosts?" he scornfully inquired. "My wife doesn't care about leaving the island."

glorious day; and there was no reason at all why I, who was not the patient, should feel in any way depressed, or as women say, "upset." It is nevertheless true that with those words of Claire's, a sinister cloud seemed to descend upon me. I was conscious, for the moment, of horror prickling my neck and my hair. Maybe my mind had slipped its moorings, gone straying into other dimensions, tripped somehow over the unseen future and taken a shock.

If so, the strange obsession did not last. I was quite myself again in a moment, coolly observing Bartholomew Lee's wife, and ready to ask questions.

"And this little man," I said encouragingly, "how does he trouble you?"

It was Emelyn who answered: "She thinks he haunts the place. She has seen him twice. But there's no such person on the island, never was. I've tried to persuade her—"

Claire cut in, without listening: "I saw him as plainly as I see you. It was at dusk, both times. He was rather small, and he stooped, as if he were hump-backed, and he limped. He was in some sort of dirty-colored clothes. He had his back to me, and I saw him run, in that limping way, round the corner behind the house; and I ran, and when I caught up—there was nobody."

"Well," I said, "we'll go round to the back of the house and have a look." And we went. And there wasn't a spot where a sparrow could have hidden itself. There's a strange loneliness that haunts

the tropic noons, a feeling as of something dimly hostile, that likes and insists on clear spaces for itself, that doesn't—emphatically doesn't—like or want you. There was that feeling about, on this bright uncaring day. But I said nothing; you can't.

INSTEAD, I told Claire—after we had returned to the house—that I'd make up a bottle of tonic, and send it from the launch; and that she'd better have a little change away when she could, and not worry herself about anything. Most of this was meant for Emelyn, and Emelyn's good bright hazel eyes watched me as I spoke; and her ears—she had very pretty ears—took it all in. She was quick; she easily managed a private word with me as I was about to make my way to the launch. "You're staying the night, of course," Claire had said, and I had thanked her and agreed; and Emelyn somehow drifted down onto the

palm-bordered pathway. "I'll see you part of the way," she said.

I asked her: "Does any stranger ever land here?"

"Nobody," she replied. "What would bring anyone?"

"Well," I said, "you know about the jewels—pearls and so on." Claire went always caparisoned like an Indian idol with the gifts of her adoring husband, and they were astonishingly valuable.

"Claire's jewel-mad," Emelyn said. "I can't understand that sort of thing."

"No," I said, thinking to myself, "you wouldn't; you're the kind that's 'good as household bread,' and just about as interesting; it's the beauty that goes jewel-mad, and the more beautiful the madder." Which is quite true, though I could never figure out the reason. You'll agree, if you stop to remember. . . .

"No one ever comes, except myself now and then," Emelyn said. "It doesn't seem kind to leave Claire without another white woman all the time. And Mr. Lee likes me to be here when he's away. He does go away such a lot, you know, and stays so long; takes trips to Sydney and Melbourne every few steamers."

"The place seems to do pretty well without him," I commented, throwing a glance about me at the ranks of fine healthy palms, new and old; no bud-rot, no elephant beetle, but flourishing trees weeded and well cared for.

"Oh, that's the black overseer."

"The what!"

"He was very lucky in getting him. The man applied, himself; came up from somewhere in Australia, an educated aborigine—there are some, you know, clever as white men; and from the time he took over, Bart's been free to come and go as he liked."

"You know him pretty well?"

"Who, Mr. Lee?" (But she had called him Bart.) "I've—seen—a good deal of him," she said cautiously. "Have you?" she added.

"Me? No, never met the chap. Is he good-looking?" I wanted to see if she'd blush. I had an idea—

SHE did not. She answered, quietly, looking away at the fluttering palms: "That's as people think. He has certainly— There is a something."

Eternal triangle? I didn't know. I wanted to know; because I was beginning to like this girl. Not as I liked, at first sight, Claire,—that was a flame

at which any normal man was bound to singe his wings, wish it or not,—but as one likes a friend, a good companion. I was strangely, doubly jealous of this Bart Lee, who, it seemed, could keep the prettiest girl in the Pacific chained like Andromeda to her rock, and at the same time fascinate the totally different type represented by Emelyn.

I SAID, tramping beside her down the hollow pathway that led to the beach and the pier:

"When does he come back?"

"We never know. He takes a steamer to Samarai, or Port Moresby, or maybe Rabaul, and from there he runs down in his own launch. No, it's not here; it stays at Samarai usually, where there's a wireless. No, we've nothing of the kind here."

"And what does he think of these mysterious ghosts?"

"Well, Claire did tell him, once, and he only said: 'Lucky the beggar's as ugly as you say, or I'd be liable to find out whether a ghost has guts in him or not—hanging round my wife.'"

"Jealous?"

"Well, he would be, you know—Claire's so very, very pretty!" I thought I heard just the faintest sigh, accompanying this remark. Ruthlessly I made my comment: "She's not *pretty*—she's just God's own gift of the most beautiful woman since Helen of Troy. How has she managed to keep out of films?"

"I think she was on her way to America when Bart—Mr. Lee—met her and married her."

"Did she have a job offered her?"

"I believe so."

"And gave it up?"

"Gave it up."

I said: "The hell she did!" And then, "I beg your pardon, but it all seems pretty astonishing. Of course this ghost business is nothing; you must keep her mind off it. A touch of fever, I suppose, and too much loneliness. The tonic will help. Will you come on board while I make it up?" Even with the thought of that modern Helen in my mind, I was ready to snatch a quarter-hour more of Emelyn's society; Emelyn, dainty lady, delicately fashioned, and sweet as the frangipanni flowers she had pinned on the shoulder of her crisp white dress.

"In a minute," she said. "—Yes, William; what is it?"

The dark overseer had followed, silently, and was standing by the jetty wait-

ing for us. I had a good look at him; he was, I thought, rather like Paul Robeson, but not so plump and kindly; tall, thin-legged in his shirt and loin-cloth; not ill-looking, but shrewd. He hardly looked at me, but I felt him taking me in.

"Miss," he said, in the abo's throaty voice, but using excellent English, "I have come down to see is there something I can take to the house for the gentleman."

"You may carry the Doctor's suitcase," she told him, briefly.

"This is a doctor?" William queried.

Emelyn didn't answer him. "Wait for the luggage," she said somewhat brusquely, following me onto the deck of the launch. "William," she said, "takes too much upon himself at times, but he's not my servant."

"He seems—superior," I told her.

"Oh, that—he runs the place all right. Now I mustn't talk while you make up the medicine." She put the question of William calmly aside.

WHEN we returned to the house, it was latish, and Claire had changed for dinner. They kept considerable state in that lone bungalow; these Australians, Claire and the mysterious Bartholomew, were like the British in that respect—evening dress and several courses for dinner (mostly out of tins) white-clad servants waiting, wines of several kinds. Claire was simply enough dressed in something pale, with a little silver jacket over her bare arms and neck to keep the mosquitoes off; but the value of the ropes of pearls she wore round that neck, fair and smooth as the pearls themselves, simply staggered me. I found consolation in supposing that they couldn't be real, although they certainly looked as if they were.

I don't know what I ate that night. I don't know what I said to Claire, or she to me; doubtless we conversed in the ordinary uninteresting fashion, but the flame of passion in my mind seemed—as it so often does—to have fused everything that lay in its pathway; I could only find shapeless slag and ashes, when I tried to remember later on.

I did remember that I had spoken now and then to Emelyn, and that she had, unobtrusively, done the honors, when Claire forgot—which was fairly often. Whatever I might think or feel about Claire, whatever burning admiration she had lighted in my heart, I could not deceive myself into thinking that she re-



garded me as other than a convenient person who had come to cure her ills. It made me feel as if we had all been swept back into the Eighteenth Century, and I was the village apothecary, who would be given his dinner by and by in the housekeeper's room.

Still, she was my patient, and I recalled my duty sufficiently to take note of the fact that she was evidently obsessed by something that hung or was placed, just behind me at the dinner-table. She looked at this thing so often and so long, that I was convinced it must be a mirror. Nor did I think of blaming her, if it was.

When we rose from table, and I sprang to hold back the door, I saw her throw a last glance at the wall as she went out. Following, I turned my head to look. It was a portrait, a colored and enlarged photograph of a man.

"Bartholomew!" I said to myself, deciding that I would have a good look at it by and by. I was desperately curious to see what manner of man this might be, who had captured the peacock-butterfly on its way to the honey of Holly-wood, and held her here, a contented prisoner; at whose careless feet the love of that grand girl Emelyn had been cast,



unnoticed and probably undesired. He didn't seem to me so very remarkable-looking; but men who hold the hearts of women often are not. I thought, as I went out after Claire and Emelyn—and there was a mirror in the way now, and I looked into it not without content—that maybe I could pick up something of Bartholomew's secret, by studying his picture. Did I want to secure that secret? Does any man, when he is twenty-something, want to make women come to his call as a dog comes to a whistle? I could have ripped him open, to get at it!

AS things happened, I did not find it necessary to study the photograph. For on that very night Bartholomew Lee came home.

I was first advised of the event by a scream from Claire. A doctor knows when to mind screams, and when not. I sat up in bed (it was after twelve o'clock) and decided that it wasn't the ghost, and wasn't a fit of hysterics; and being neither, it was no business of mine. Especially as, on the scream, there followed a flood of half-heard talk and exclamations, and then, the unmistakable sound of a kiss. Kisses, rather.

I turned over, told myself not to be more of a damned fool than I could help, and—eventually—went to sleep. . . .

In the morning even Claire herself interested me less than the chance of seeing and studying her husband. Bart Lee was at table when I came in. He rose and greeted me civilly. I saw a man of medium height, very well made, well dressed; with an olive complexion, black

hair, blue chin closely shaved, and rather ordinary features. Nothing remarkable about him, except—

Yes. When you caught his eyes, they held. They were large, hidden under thick heavy eyelids (like Mary Queen of Scots' eyelids in her portraits, my irrelevant fancy assured me); they were dark gleaming gray, and the lid made a straight line across them halfway down the ball. He didn't raise those lids often, but when somebody said something that interested him,—when I told him, for example that I was going away immediately after breakfast, a fact that seemed to please him,—up went the thick curtains, and you looked into a strange furnace of feeling; a place where things unknown and possibly violent flickered like vapors over molten steel.

HE made conversation; he asked me about my native patients, about the launch, mentioned the late improvement in the weather. I answered fitfully; I was busy watching him. I wanted, shamelessly, desperately, to excavate his secret; find out why these two women—and probably many more, to judge by the existing samples—had laid their hearts at his feet. I was years younger, better looking, better educated, better born; but nobody in particular was burning incense before me.

I found no answer to my question. Women might be able to answer it; it was always a mystery to men, even when that charm of his had been publicized, broadcast, torn to pieces before the face of the world—as it was, after.

Before I went, he asked me privately about Claire's health.

"What's this about ghosts?" he rather scornfully inquired.

"Merely overstrained nerves," I said. "I've made her up a tonic. But if you could manage to get her away for a trip to Sydney, it might be best."

Up went, for a moment, the thick white shutters of his eyelids; I saw the eyes beneath them, brilliant, inscrutable. His nostrils dilated until the nicks beside the nose showed up like knife-cuts. But he only said: "My wife doesn't care about leaving the island."

I said: "If the trouble recurs—"

"It isn't likely to," he told me, in the voice of a man who is prepared to answer for everyone and everything.

"Well—" I said, as one says when one feels it's time to be going. There was really nothing more that I could do.

Lee shook hands with finality. The launch was awaiting below.

As I went down the winding pathway, I saw William the black overseer slipping through the ornamental shrubberies near the house. He moved like a shadow or a snake, hardly seen, stirring nothing in his passage. He was gone almost before I had realized his presence. I didn't know why, but I felt sure he had been watching Lee.

After a while,—after the launch was under way, with those incomparable seas of eastern New Guinea gliding in jade and silver and Chinese blue beneath the keel,—I began to remember some of the things that Emelyn had said to me, while I was staring, inattentive, at Claire. She had spoken of Lee's business in Australia; the company-promoting interests that now and then took him away. I hadn't listened, but I was listening now, to the scraps that I remembered. Company business—yes, Bart Lee looked like that, shrewd and inscrutable; he would attract money as a magnet attracts needles, and stick to it as fast. I shouldn't care, I thought, to have shares in anything he promoted. . . . And that was where the pearls came from!

It's a queer thing, but when you get away into that archipelago, remote, unvisited, poisonously lovely, among those thousands of strange islands, high and low and little and big, you are apt to lose your ordinary ways of thinking; the fairy-tale quality of it takes hold of you, and you could believe anything. Lee's place, Lee's home, his restless existence, his amazingly lovely wife, the jewels she wore and worshiped, the ghost, the gliding black overseer—all these things seemed to me, as long as I was cruising in the enchanted archipelago, interesting rather than remarkable. But when I got back to steamer ports and civilization, when the last dreaming peak of pale-blue Goodenough had melted into the sky, and the foaming circles of the Conflicts were far behind—then I realized that the island of Bartholomew Lee held something sinister, unnatural. It didn't seem all right. It was like a scrap torn out of a sensational story, in which you couldn't quite believe.

But I had carried away from it all a headache that made everything else of little import. There was no help for it; nor any hope for me. I tried to put it out of my mind, and fill the enormous vacancies it left with work. And to some extent I succeeded.

For several months I heard nothing at all about the island, or Lee, or my patient Claire. Then I "went South," as we all go when we can, from the New Guineas; tired out, as we always are. I called on a professional friend of mine (a doctor who treats himself as a fool for patient), and after we had had our talk, he said, taking up the Sydney Morning Herald: "I see they've caught the Bluebeard murderer at last."

I told him: "I don't take much interest in murders. And anyhow, we miss most of the newspapers, up there."

He said: "You'd be as abnormal as the murderer himself if you weren't interested in *this*. He's the chap they were after for marrying about a dozen women and doing away with six or seven."

"Oh, that!" I said. "I heard something. It's a type that comes up every now and then. You remember such and such a case, and so and so." I quoted instances.

"Yes," he cut in, "but you don't grow many of them in New Guinea."

I said: "What?"

"Why, man, you're all to pieces. You're shaking. Let's have your temperature again. I bet you're due for another attack of malaria. I—"

"Damn your thermometers! Put it away. Give me that paper."

He gave it and watched me as I read. I may have looked strange, sick. I was past caring about that. The paper summarized, briefly, an interesting case that had just been brought to a conclusion by the capture of the wanted man, one James Jennings, alias Francis Stone, alias Bartholomew Lee. Jennings, or Lee, as I will call him, was said to possess an extraordinary fascination for women. He was not remarkable in appearance, except as regarded his eyes, which were singularly bright and piercing; commonly he kept them cast down.

"That's wrong," I said. "He used to keep them part closed."

"Why, Lord, do you—"

"Shut up. I want to read."

I READ on. Lee owned a plantation in Papua, and was married. From time to time—apparently as he required money, of which he spent a very great deal—he used to visit Australia; and on that great stage, almost as large as the whole of Europe, carried out his secret crimes. He always chose a woman who had valuable jewelry, mostly pearls. He made love to her, eloped with her if she was

married, wedded her if she was single, and sooner or later killed her for her jewels. Unlike the common criminal, he used various methods: poison, pistols, drowning; and in every case he'd managed the affair with such consummate cleverness that it had been impossible for a long time to sheet anything home to him. He had in the end been betrayed by a woman whom he had left on finding out that her famous pearls were sham; she had repented almost as soon as the words were out of her mouth, and was now contradicting herself to such an extent that it might be difficult to prove the case. Other women had been expected to come forward—this man had not always killed; but such was his fascination that none of his lovers would give evidence against him. What the police had was chiefly circumstantial.

"He'll hang, for all that," my friend said, reading over my shoulder. "They're well on his track, and he can't make eyes at the judge and jury—so long as they keep women off it. By the way, what do you know of him?"

There was no secret now. I told all I knew, not forgetting the little lame ghost. My friend laughed at that. "Clever chap. That was the disguise they speak of. Double-soled boot, padded coat, stoop, whitening stuff on his hair, and a very ingenious plate in his mouth that changed the shape of his cheeks."

"But why—" I began.

"Jealousy. He was spying on his wife, after he had come home secretly. That was your ghost. In practice, let me remind you, young—"

"To hell with practice!" I said; I was feeling that way. "Thanks, and good-by."

"Where are you going?" he asked me,

"Back by the next boat."

"But your condition—"

I said: "To hell with that too!"

IN the next few days, I tried hard to obtain leave to see Lee in his prison, but it proved impossible. I had some wild scheme, I believe, of helping him to escape and get back to the islands; there are ways of hiding people there. I'd have burned him alive with pleasure, but then I'd have burned myself alive to give pleasure to Claire; and I knew, so mad was her passion for him, that she would have believed nothing, taken him back against all evidence. So, indeed, would most of the other women—the women he had deceived and robbed and killed—for her.

There have been many great passions for women, but surely the passion of Bartholomew Lee for Claire stands unsurpassed. To suppose that wicked people, people almost all evil, cannot love, is to make an elementary mistake in reckoning up human nature. And of all the wicked lovers of the world, none, I think, stands out more clearly against that dark background of might and crime than Lee. I take it—you can contradict me if you like—that all the good in the man was concentrated, flourishing like some shining Dead Sea fruit among the ashes, in his love for that soulless beauty Claire.

THERE was no steamer for weeks. Before I secured passage, the papers were full of the escape of the notorious criminal Bartholomew Lee. That cleverness of his had served him well; but it could have done little without what I believe he had—the assistance of the wife of a jail official. Once again, women had given all they could to Lee. . . .

There are queer little ships to be found about the New South Wales coast, by those who know where to look; some in Sydney harbor itself, others elsewhere. They can be bought—or their owners can. A handful of stolen pearls, I afterward heard, secured the escape of Lee.

When I found my way to the island, it was one of those perfect days that exist only in the tropics; sunshine thick as honey and vivid as spilled gold, dripping from the long points of the moveless palm-leaves; Chinese-blue sea with surf crawling on white sand, almost asleep; and above, no sound but the faint *chip-chip* of mattocks and tomahawks at work in the bush. Peace, beauty—and dark tragedy beneath it all.

Claire was sitting on the high veranda of the house; she was splendidly dressed, and she dripped with pearls. I heard some one moving in the background—Emelyn, I guessed, going to warn him. . . .

"So you've come again," was Claire's cool greeting. She yawned behind her hand. She was acting it out well, but I saw the hate in her eyes, and I wondered—

She would not have struck down the barrel of a revolver pointed at me, or saved me from a knife secretly thrown. She would have smiled. I was Bart's enemy. Anyone who came to the island now, represented danger.

Perhaps that idea was in my head, when I hurriedly spoke: "You don't like

me; never mind, I'm your friend. If there is anything I can do, anything at all, you understand—you may ask me. I want only to help."

Something that was almost kind came into her hostile eyes; those wonderful blue eyes that might have held thousands in fee; that had been kept in a sort of magic captivity upon the island, where she was caught by chains of love and pearls. "Do you understand launch engines?" she asked me quickly.

"I'm pretty fair at it. Is yours—"

"Yes, it won't go, and we need it; the stores are running out. How did you come here? Is your launch below?"

"No—I'm sorry." I had not cared to take the Government boat on my wild-goose chase. "I came in a native cutter." I said. "Where's your launch? I'll see what I can do; and if it's hopeless, there's the cutter, anyhow."

"Oh, you are good!" she cried; and suddenly, springing from her chair, she came rustling over to me in all her silks and pearls, and kissed me on the mouth.

I have that at least to remember: a kiss flung like a coin, and like a coin, worth only what it bought.

I was hurrying down to the jetty, to see what could be done with the launch; suddenly I was pulled up by something that I saw below: The launch, with its engine in order, running swiftly out through the passage of the reef. It was driven by the black overseer; and behind it, towing through the rippled seas, my cutter followed.

They had seen it, above. When I got back breathless, all three were standing together on the hill, looking down at the launch and the cutter, and the black overseer William.

LEE spoke; he was amazingly cool. "Send for the boss boy," he ordered a house-man. The "boss boy" came; and Lee questioned him for a few minutes in the native tongue, then turned to us.

"William," he said, "is a black-tracker in the service of the New South Wales police. These lads have known it, all along."

"More lies," cried Claire, flinging her arms round Lee's neck. "Lies, lies everywhere! Where is he gone?"

"To Samarai and the wireless," Lee said. He had an arm about Claire's waist, and was supporting her. Emelyn, in the background, looked as if she were going to faint, so I went over to her and said, "Sit down at once and lower your

head between your knees—" since nobody was holding her.

She did as I told her, and presently looked up. Claire and Bart Lee had left the veranda.

"WHAT will he—will they—do?" I asked. It seemed as clear as daylight now, that the game was played out.

"I don't know," Emelyn said. She was shaking all over, and her hands were like ice when I took them. "What's the matter?" I said.

"I don't know," she answered.

"Where have they gone?"

"I don't—" On the third word she fainted, and in good earnest this time.

I laid her on the floor, and waited till she came round. Then I gave her some whisky. "Now you can talk," I said. "You can tell me what's frightening you. I wouldn't let anyone hurt you, Emelyn; don't be afraid."

"I am afraid."

"What of?" I had her cold hands in mine. I could not warm them.

"Death," she said, and suddenly cried, "... She'd do now, I thought."

I got up and left her. The thick gold sun had thickened to a gilded fog; from the water, below the heights on which the house had been built, came cries of planing seabirds, heard but not seen. It was fairly light on the top of the island; the sea-mist did not reach so high. Down on the plantation flats the boys had ceased working, and everything was still.

Through the stillness and through the fog came one sound—a long cry, falling and dying. I ran my hardest. I reached the precipitous edge of the island, where coral cliffs stood up a hundred feet above deep sea. Below me the mist was swirling; it parted; I could see for a moment the deep blue surface of the windward ocean, flawed in two places. As I looked, the flaws and the foam disappeared.

I went back to the house.

"You should have told me," I said to Emelyn. "You knew!"

"I knew you'd stop them," she said. "And wasn't it their right?"

"You thought that, and you let him go? I wouldn't have let *her* go—if I'd known."

"You see," she said, "I can love better than you." . . .

That is years ago. Emelyn and I have found, since then, that there are different ways of loving. When the sun sets, the stars come out. And there is, for us, the household fire.

Two Quarts, Please

PARKED before the barracks of Black Horse Troop, New York State Police, stood a glistening white sedan, obviously not long from the factory. "State Police," was painted in black letters above the windshield. The same legend, in even larger letters, adorned the rear of the car. On both sides there was lettered in bold print: "Black Horse Troop."

"I gather," declared Lieutenant James Crosby, pushing his way through the crowd that had collected, "that this is a State Police car. I am quick like that."

"All it needs," said Max Payton, the top-sergeant, "is a few flags."

The group parted again as Lieutenant Edward David, better known as Tiny, heaved his vast form forward. Pausing a few feet from the car, he adjusted an invisible monocle, and inspected the vehicle.

"Quite so," was his verdict. "Keep you chaps out of mischief. No reason in the world why you can't deliver some milk in the mornings. Nice rig they bought for you. Rather."

Mr. Crosby took his cue, and proceeded to develop the theme:

"On Sundays and holidays you can use it to peddle ice-cream and frozen dainties. Also it is good for parades, bridge-dedications and escorting visiting politicians. By the way, just whose bright idea was this?"

Mr. David's gesture was intended to register modesty.

"I don't like to talk about myself—not much," he explained. "But I believe I did suggest to the Skipper that you boys have quite a dash of spare time on your hands." He examined the sedan through the invisible monocle. "But this car is white. I suggested pink."

A trooper broke through the ring and addressed Mr. David:

"The Old Man wants you."

Mr. David had a moment of uneasiness. The car was visible from the office, and the office windows were open. But he rallied quickly.

"Very good. Probably wants me to help him decide who goes out on the milk-wagon." He pushed back eager applicants who did not exist. "Now, now, boys! I know how you feel. Pardon-

TINY DAVID
and his pals
were skeptical of
the new white
cars—until an exciting
case taught them
wisdom.



able ambition, and all that. But after all, I can't play favorites."

"And he wants *you*," the trooper informed Mr. Crosby.

Mr. Crosby addressed Mr. David:

"Something tells me that your big mouth has done it again. If you have talked me into—"

Mr. David, however, was busy removing invisible dust from the spotless sedan.

"I'll think up a snappy slogan for you," he promised. "Something like this: '*High grade bovine products, served by low-grade morons.*' Or—"

The broad shoulders of Captain Charles Field, commanding officer of the troop, appeared in a window.

"Coming right away, sir," said Tiny.

"**T**HIS," declared Captain Field, when they were in his office, "represents the last word in traffic-control. In reality, we are going back a few thousand years. In ancient China, I am informed, the watchmen rang bells as they made their rounds. That informed law-abiding citizens they were on the job, and also served as a warning to the lawbreakers. Why do you wear uniforms?"

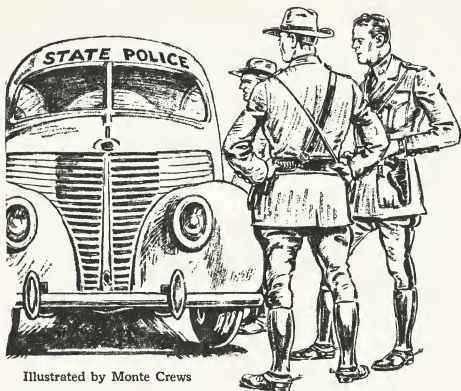
Apparently they didn't know.

"Same idea with the white cars," continued Captain Field. "The public will see you."

"Yes indeed, sir," said Tiny David.

Captain Field ignored the interruption:

"Knowing troopers are about, every driver will slow down, and watch his step. The result will be less accidents. That's prevention; and prevention, the copy-books say, is better than cure. At any rate, it is a step forward from the days of hiding behind a billboard, and pouncing on one poor goat, while other reckless



Illustrated by Monte Crews

By ROBERT R. MILL

motorists, many of whom are guiltier and more of a menace, go on their merry ways."

Mr. Crosby took the bull by the horns. "When do you want us to assign a crew to the car, sir?"

But Captain Field relished his task, and was not to be hurried.

"We have only one car," he explained, "but more are coming. Twenty-six, to be exact. The traffic experts are using this neck of the woods as a guinea pig. If the cars prove satisfactory here,—and they will,—they will be adopted universally."

His smile was a benediction.

"Like all new things, the white cars will meet with a certain amount of ridicule. They will draw a type of low comedy. Who can cope with that better than a couple of low comedians?"

His smile was broader.

"I have picked you two to take out the first car, and give the public a chance to get accustomed to it. Cruise around over the entire territory. Pick the highways where the traffic is heaviest. If you run across any other complaints, investigate them. Your car will be working for you

on traffic control, even while you are doing other work.

"And take your time," he concluded. "You may be on this detail for weeks."

WHEN they stowed their duffel in the rear of the sedan, the audience had increased. Captain Field stood framed in the window, smiling approval on the scene.

A voice, apparently feminine, called:

"Please leave two quarts today, Mister. Aunt Sarah is here."

The voice of a small boy gave the order:

"Make mine vanilla."

"Don't forget to pick up the empties," Sergeant Henry Linton directed.

Mr. Crosby sought refuge inside the car. Mr. David, however, attempted to brave the storm.

"You wouldn't understand," he told them. "This is an experiment of far-reaching importance. Naturally, they picked men who are—" Mr. David, usually at ease, began to flounder a bit. "Persons who are—"

"You wouldn't mean morons?" asked Mr. Linton.



"No reason why you can't deliver milk."

"Get started," Mr. Crosby begged. "You asked for it. You got it. Now take it."

Mr. David decided that was good advice.

"Our special this week," he declared, as he squeezed in behind the wheel, "is cottage cheese. And have you entered our new contest? With each three tops from the packages containing any of our products, you are entitled to suggest one name for our nice white—"

"Gurr-r-r-r."

The sound came from the window.

The white car, the sun shining on its glistening paint, pulled away from the barracks, and headed for the highway.

"Now that we have the wagons out on the road," said Captain Field, "we will have to do a little work around the dairy. We have a new stable detail. Linton is the sergeant in charge, and all hands in that group report to him for duty."

Mr. Linton shook his head with resignation.

"In time," he muttered, "I may be able to work up to a wagon."

"What was that?" asked Captain Field.

"I said that was a good-looking car, sir."

"Glad you like them," said Captain Field. "You will have a lot of them to wash during the next few months. Twenty-six, to be exact."

"Yes sir," Mr. Linton admitted. "White cars do get dirty quick."

The log of the white car, outward bound, went about like this:

MR. CROSBY: Where are we going?

MR. DAVID: What do you care? Are you particular where you are laughed at?

The car passed a W.P.A. project, where several men leaned on shovels and gave the white sedan their undivided attention.

MR. C: I never looked forward to that particularly, but I can see that it has its points.

MR. D: There, you would be doing something useful.

MR. C: They skip the most useful projects. Why haven't they done something about your big mouth? And what is the matter with that crop-control crowd? They could plow under two-thirds of your conversation, and still have a surplus.

MR. D: Just so they plant a few trees around you.

MR. C: Why do I need any trees around me?

MR. D: You cry so much. Need flood-control work. Bound to be erosion.

They developed this theme, each finding the other the subject for work by various governmental agencies, until noon found them in Canaras Lake, parked in front of the leading hotel, the porch of which housed an interested crowd.

A traveling-man, who had a reputation as a wag, opened the session.

"Are you fellows giving away any samples?"

Mr. Crosby frowned. Mr. David, however, was smiling dangerously.

"Yes, indeed," he said. "We have some very elegant black eyes. Wouldn't you like to try one or two of them?"

This produced a temporary lull, during which they gained the dining-room, where they ordered freely.

Between the salad and dessert, the maid asked:

"You fellows going to the carnival?"

"Where is the carnival?" Mr. Crosby demanded.

"I dunno," the girl admitted. "But Mae, my girl friend, said she seen one of the wagons in town."

Mr. David sighed resignedly.

"It was a white wagon, wasn't it?" he asked. "We will be there. Bring the pie before you take time out to laugh."

THE afternoon passed with only one untoward incident. Mr. Crosby, having exhausted his supply of cigarettes, requested a halt at a general store, the porch of which was held down by an

elderly native, whose jaw was extended by a wad of "eating tobacco."

"He-he-he," tittered the native as he surveyed the white car. "Be that one of them new-fangled deadwagons, or an ambew-lance-ye?"

"This is an ambew-lance-ye," said Mr. Crosby. "We use it to carry dimwits, who are sick in the head. How would you like to—"

"He-he-he," came the cackle. "You be riding in it, aint ye?"

Later, when the car was under way again, Mr. Crosby admitted: "He is right, at that. I *am* riding in it."

FIFTY miles south, where the traffic was heavier, they came upon Lieutenant McMann, who, they noted without pleasure, as the two cars pulled side by side, was driving a neat black sedan.

"Did you get the flash?" asked Mr. McMann.

"All we get," declared Mr. Crosby, "is bum wisecracks."

"We," Mr. David explained, "have gone back a few thousand years. We are back to the days when cops carried bells so the taxpayers would know they were on the job. Crooks heard the bells too, and didn't do any crooking, because they knew the cops were on the job. It worked so well in China that we are going to try it here. Only instead of the bell, we use this baby-carriage. Just the sight of it stops all crime."

Mr. McMann was not over-impressed.

"Yeah! You should have been driving it around the streets of Syracuse a few hours ago. They didn't have any white car, but they did have a swell bank-robbery."

"Wait until I get my first aids for feeble intellects," said Mr. Crosby, fishing for paper and pencil.

"Three men," Mr. McMann began. "Vague descriptions. Held up First Marine Bank. Escaped with twenty thousand dollars, mostly in small bills. Killed the cashier and wounded a customer in their get-away. They drove a black coupé. License number not obtained, but they are believed to be headed this way. Use extreme care, and all that sort of stuff."

"We don't have to be careful," said Mr. Crosby, as he finished his paper-work. "With this chariot, they will see us long before we see them. They are the ones who will be careful."

Mr. McMann sympathized with them, and then went on his way.

"What do we do now?" Mr. Crosby demanded.

"We go right on preventing," said Mr. David. "What else can we do? We can't put this buggy in our pockets; and the Old Man—may all his children have long ears—would be right sore if we painted it black. So we go on preventing."

Their prevention work took them on the roads where the traffic was heaviest. There, they were forced to admit to themselves, but not to each other, the white car accomplished the purpose for which it was designed. The color attracted instant attention, and the legend, "*State Police*," was visible for quite a distance.

Speeding motorists slowed down. Reckless drivers stopped cutting in and out of line. One man, about to pass another car on a hill, sighted the police car, and hurriedly pulled back into line.

Tiny David, noting these results, admitted to himself that the effect would be even better when the public was educated to the sight of the white cars.

"I guess the traffic-sharps have something," he muttered.

"What did you say?" demanded Mr. Crosby.

"We will eat," said Mr. David. "Then we will do a little more preventing."

WHILE Messrs. David and Crosby were eating, a black coupé, containing three men, made its way steadily northward, using side-roads whenever they were available. The man at the wheel of the car spoke in a plaintive whine:

"When do we eat?"

The man sitting beside him shrugged. The lone occupant of the rear seat, however, leaned forward. His beady, narrowed eyes were trained upon the driver. And the driver was ill at ease under the scrutiny. He squirmed behind the wheel, and bowed his bullet-like head, from which small ears extended at right angles.

"When—do—we—eat?"

The man in the rear seat repeated the question of the driver, spacing the words, and making a lash of each of them.

"I suppose, according to you, we park this bus in front of some hash-house along the main drag, and go in to sink our teeth into three sirloins. Have I got to knock it into your head that this bus is hot?"

The driver subsided, but the fiery glance of the man in the rear seat remained trained upon him.

The man beside the driver took part in the proceedings:

"Me, I could go for plain and fancy eating myself. My stomick is beginning to feel that my throat has been cut."

The man in the rear seat growled.

"What the hell is this?" he demanded. "All you two guys think of is groceries! Try this on your piano: Your stomick may think that your throat is cut, but if you stop around here to feed your faces, your whole body is due for a burning."

They subsided, and the car rushed on. The man in the rear seat swore softly to himself, cursing the desperate need of money that had caused him to cast his lot with weaklings such as these. The two men were good enough in their limited way, he admitted. Stupe, the man at the wheel, away from his own specialty, probably was stupid enough to merit his name; but put him behind the wheel of a car, and he became a master workman. Before the day was over, they might have need for clever driving.

Fisheye, the other gentleman, might seem awkward and out of place in the ordinary pursuits of life, but put a sub-machine gun in his hands, and he became a skilled technician, almost an artist. The gentleman in the rear seat hoped there would be no more shooting. But you never knew. Therefore, for the present, it was up to him to humor Messrs. Stupe and Fisheye.

"Right now," he explained, adopting the soothing tone one employs with unreasonable children, "it aint humanly possible to dope things out so you guys can tie the feedbags on. But I got it in mind. I got my own heart set on toying with a steak, or maybe a broiler. But there is a time for everything. Right now is the time for work."

Fisheye made one last protest:

"I aint used to working on an empty stomick."

Silence greeted this.

The car continued on its way, moving steadily northward, while the lengthening shadows gave way to dusk.

SERGEANT MAX PAYTON and Trooper George Wood, the latter a rookie, held down a station along the road in the southern portion of the territory covered by the Black Horse Troop. Throughout the afternoon they worked methodically, stopping and checking each oncoming car. Approaching night found them tired and hungry, with no prospect of relief.

Then Payton, in the rôle of instructor, spoke a word of caution:

"After dark, take it easy. Let me take the cars, and you back me up. If anything looks funny, or I call to you, make a dive for our car, pick me up, and get after them. Got that?"

Trooper Wood glanced at the trooper-car, which was parked in the shadows at the wide of the road, and nodded.

Darkness descended; and the work of a trooper, Wood decided, wasn't as exciting as it was cracked up to be. There were cars enough, but after they were stopped, they turned out to be occupied by tourists, residents going to and from the stores in near-by towns, and now and then boys and girls on their way to a dance. Sergeant Payton, however, used the same elaborate care as he halted and approached each car. It was beginning to strike Trooper Wood as rather funny, particularly when Payton drew a car at the wheel of which was a woman of about eighty, who had a tongue dipped in acid, and who did not hesitate to use it.

Sergeant Payton chuckled as he waved her on:

"All right, Grandma. On your way."

THERE was a lull. Then they saw the lights of a car coming from the south. Sergeant Payton took a few steps forward.

Trooper Wood chuckled. "Lay off the old ladies, Sergeant."

The car came on. Sergeant Payton stepped into the glare of the oncoming headlights, and raised his hands. His whistle sounded shrilly.

"Halt!" he cried. "State Police!"

Stupe, at the wheel of the approaching car, hesitated.

"Slow down," ordered the man in the rear seat. The driver obeyed. "Just before you get up to that clown," the leader directed, "throw her into reverse, skid her right around, and head south as if all hell was after you."

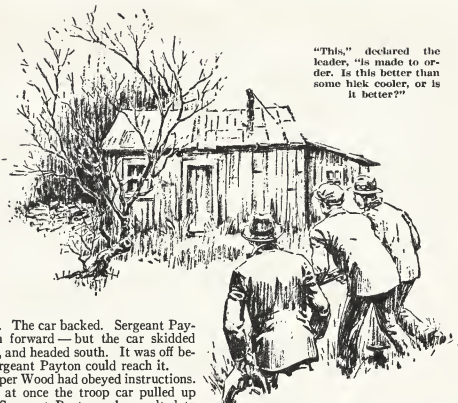
Stupe moistened his lips with his tongue.

"I gotcha," he muttered.

Fisheye's hands groped along the floor until they encountered a gun, which they stroked lovingly.

"None of that," cautioned the man in the rear seat. "Wait until those monkeys chase after us. Then cripple their bus."

Sergeant Payton walked toward the car, which had slowed down almost to a halt. There was the sound of scraping rubber, as the wheels were thrown into



"This," declared the leader, "is made to order. Is this better than some hick cooler, or is it better?"

reverse. The car backed. Sergeant Payton ran forward—but the car skidded around, and headed south. It was off before Sergeant Payton could reach it.

Trooper Wood had obeyed instructions. Almost at once the troop car pulled up beside Sergeant Payton, who vaulted to the seat beside the driver.

"Those're the babies!" cried Payton. "Get after them!"

There was the crash of breaking glass, and the barrel of a gun was extended from the rear window of the coupé.

"Duck!" ordered Sergeant Payton.

The stillness of the night was broken by the cough-like roar of a sub-machine gun. Payton was standing. He held the top of the windshield with his left hand, in order to steady himself. His revolver was in his right hand. He fired at the invisible gunner. Then he took the gasoline tank of the car ahead as his target.

The bullets of the sub-machine gun crashed into the radiator of the troop car. The car gave a lurch as a tire was shot to pieces. Then it swerved to the side of the road, and crashed against a bank. Sergeant Payton continued to fire at the gasoline tank of the car ahead, which was pulling rapidly away.

Trooper Wood, white of face and tight-lipped, turned to his companion.

"Couldn't help it, Sergeant. When the tire went, it jerked the wheel right out of my hand."

Payton grinned.

"You did a swell job. Most guys slow down when they pull toward a tommy-gun. You didn't. We'll leave this junk, and leg it for a telephone."

Down the road from the crippled troop-car, the black coupé continued south. Stupe, the gangster at the wheel, drove mechanically, but his heart was not in his work. His thoughts were centered upon a juicy steak, and the recent incident had pushed that steak a greater distance beyond his reach.

But it was Fisheye who put their common doubts into words:

"Just where does this put us?"

The man on the rear seat laughed. It was rather forced, but almost convincing.

"It puts us right here, and not in some hick cooler."

"And then what?" Fisheye demanded.

Their leader explained patiently:

"We keep going south until we hit a side-road. Then we double back to the north, keeping off the main highways. On account of us making bums out of those monkeys, they will be burning up and down the main drags like a parade of Elks. We aint getting tangled up in that parade."

"No," said Stupe, "we aint peerading. And we aint eating, neither."

The man in the rear lost patience.

"Why don't you freeze your teeth, and give your tongue a sleighride? If I had a pork-chop in my mitt, I would use it to slap that big mouth of yours shut."

Stupe sighed with resignation.

"If youse had a pork-chop," he declared, "I would be glad to—"

The last of the sentence was lost as the motor began to backfire. Automatically, Stupe reached for the choke.

"What's the matter?" demanded the man in the rear.

Stupe was busy with the controls.

The purr of the engine became normal. But that was followed by a series of explosions. The car jerked several times, and then came to a stop.

"Aint that nice!" said Fisheye.

Stupe, who was bending over the instrument-board, made the laconic announcement:

"The gadget that says how much gas we has, says that we aint got none."

"The hell you say!"

The exclamation came from the gentleman in the rear, who threw open the door, leaped to the ground, and made his way to the rear, where a flashlight was brought into play. Soon he was back.

"You said it!" He swore fluently. "That damn' monkey shot the gas-tank full of holes."

"And where does that put us now?" demanded Fisheye.

"It puts us still on the outside of some hick cooler," snarled the leader. "Come on. Pile out. Here is where we ditch this bus."

"Ditch the bus?" repeated Stupe.

"Ditch the bus," declared the leader, with some heat. "We are hell from nowhere. They don't have garages on every other block in this neck of the woods. Besides, wouldn't we look good walking in and saying: 'Brother, them cowboy cops shot us up. How's for fixing us up?' Like hell! We hit the woods. When things dies down, we cops ourselves a new bus, and rolls along our way."

Fisheye glanced at the dark shape of the trees that lined both sides of the road, and shivered.

"Guys what goes monkeying around in the woods gets lost," he protested.

***Author's Note:** The New York State Police have grown accustomed to the white cars, and they do like them. So do the public, for statistics show that automobile accidents have decreased to a marked extent in every section where the white cars are operated.

As for hampering the troopers in the performance of other duties:

For three consecutive months the patrols in Northern New York making the most arrests, other than traffic cases, have been patrols assigned to white cars.

The leader snorted his scorn.

"Dumb guys like you does," he retorted. "Not me." He glanced aloft. "That's the North Star. You follow that, and you go north. Let's get going."

Some two hours later, very tired, very hungry, and with their clothing and skin much the worse for wear, they emerged upon a clearing, at the far end of which was a crude hut. They approached warily, satisfied themselves the place was unoccupied, and broke down the door.

"This," declared the leader as they entered, "is made to order. Is this better than the inside of some hick cooler, or is it better?"

Stupe, who was inspecting what appeared to be the culinary section of the cabin, groaned dismally.

"Pepper and salt—not a damn' thing else. I want something to eat, and I want it bad!" He thought deeply, and arrived at a result, which he shared with his companions. "They feed you regular in a cooler."

MESSRS. DAVID and CROSBY, who, with the white car,* were holding down a spot along the main highway a short distance north of where Sergeant Payton had gone into action, had passed an unprofitable evening. Now, as the night wore along, Mr. Crosby was moved to open protest.

"Haven't we done enough preventing? Haven't we gone back far enough? Haven't we shown the dear taxpayers they are getting something for their money? Anyway, there are no taxpayers left to see us. They are all in bed. They,"—he glanced pointedly at his companion,— "aren't dumb."

"The white cars," Mr. David quoted from an official letter on the subject, "can be used to equal advantage at night. They stand out—"

"Let them," declared his companion; "but Mrs. Crosby's pride and joy, James, is going to bed. Or maybe," he amended,

And lest the writer be accused of being careless of probabilities:

When the white cars were new, three much-wanted gentlemen from a big city—three wise, blasé gentlemen—allowed troopers to drive right up to them one dark night, because—"We thought that damned thing was a milk-wagon."

So, all in all, law-enforcement did rather well when it went back a few thousand years, and learned a valuable lesson from the ancient Chinese.

"cut himself in on a patrol that isn't saddled with a white elephant, and has a chance to pick up the babies who pulled that bank job, if and when they show up."

Mr. David glanced up.
"Speaking of taxpayers—"

An open touring-car came to a halt near the troop-car. The two occupants, after staring uncertainly at the white car, stepped out and walked across the road.

"Are you troopers?" asked one of the men.

Mr. Crosby welcomed a work-out.

"Can't you read the signs on this car?" he demanded. "If we aren't troopers, you can sue the State for false advertising."

"I see your uniforms now," said the citizen.

"Now that we are old friends," was Tiny David's contribution, "what can we do for you?"

"We"—the man indicated his companion—"have a cabin back in the woods. We use it for when we go fishing."

"You wouldn't use it for night-hunting, or a bit of jacking?" Mr. Crosby cut in.

The man was properly indignant.

"We obey the game laws. We belong to the Rod and Gun Club—"

"They all do," said Mr. Crosby.

"Say, I pay taxes."

"Then take a look at this white car," said Mr. Crosby. "They bought it for you."

The man appealed to Mr. David.

"Is he screwy?"

"At times," Tiny David admitted.

"But what about your cabin?"

"WE went there earlier tonight," the man explained, "planning to sleep there, and start fishing early tomorrow. Before we were in sight, we heard somebody talking, so we took it easy through the woods. Some guys had broken in, and are staying there. They didn't see us, and we left to find some troopers. They can be arrested for burglary, can't they?"

"Yes," Tiny David admitted.

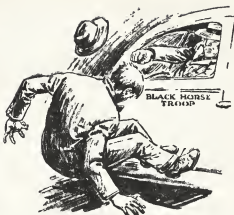
Mr. Crosby sighed with resignation.

"It's only about a five-mile walk, isn't it?"

"Not much more than a mile," said the man. "An old lumber-road runs right close to the camp."

"That's too bad," said Mr. Crosby.

"All I need to round off my day is a nice



long walk and a few more bum wise-cracks. Well, pile in."

The man hesitated. "Hadn't we better all use my car?"

"Perish the thought," said Mr. Crosby. "This car is the last word. Just designed for things of this sort. Camp burglars are attracted to it like women to a bargain counter. Pile in."

The two men entered the white car, and it drove away.

ALL was not harmony in the cabin where the three had sought refuge. There were wooden bunks, but they were bare and uncomfortable. Stupe and Fish-eye tried to sleep, but had scant success. Thereupon Stupe gave voice to his former complaint:

"Gawd, but I am hungry!"

The third man, whom his companions addressed as Lucky, snorted his impatient disgust.

"Get a record made of that. I'm sick of listening to you birds yap." He picked up a flashlight. "I'm going out and take a look around."

Before long he was back.

"There is a sort of a trail out here. It must lead somewhere. What do you say we follow it a bit, and see can we connect with some grub? I am as hungry as you guys. Now is the time to do something about it, rather than waste time when it is light, and we should be making miles."

They were out of the bunks in record time. Outside, the man known as Lucky took charge.

"You guys stay behind me."

He led them along a trail, not too clearly defined, which led through the woods. As the distance increased, they grumbled audibly, but were silenced by Lucky, who



"That aint Lucky,"
gasped Stupe.
"That's—"

threatened to return to the cabin with the appetites of all three unsatisfied.

The trail widened, and became a rough road.

"Now we are getting somewhere," said Lucky, who was well in advance of his companions. . . . "What's that?" He listened intently, then motioned his companions back into the woods. He also slipped behind a tree.

From that vantage spot he watched the lights of an approaching car. It moved slowly, its sides brushing away branches that extended over the road. It was a white car, and to this dweller of city streets, it had a familiar look.

He whispered hoarsely to his companions:

"We eat, guys. It aint no steaks, but it is a lot better than mountain air."

The white troop car moved forward slowly.

"Better pull up here," said one of the civilians. "Don't want to scare them away."

Mr. Crosby, who was at the wheel, brought the car to a halt.

There was a jolt as a figure stepped on the running-board. The lights from the instrument-board dimly revealed a grin-

ning face, which was thrust into the open window beside Crosby.

"Say, pal, how about selling us a quart or two of milk, and—"

Mr. Crosby's reaction was entirely automatic. He had reached the limit. His right fist drew back until it grazed Tiny David, sitting beside him. Then the fist shot forward and found its mark, the chin of the face thrust in the window.

At the same time Tiny David, his gun in his hand, slipped out of the door on the other side of the car.

IT was very quiet in the woods. Then a hoarse voice asked:

"How about it, Lucky?"

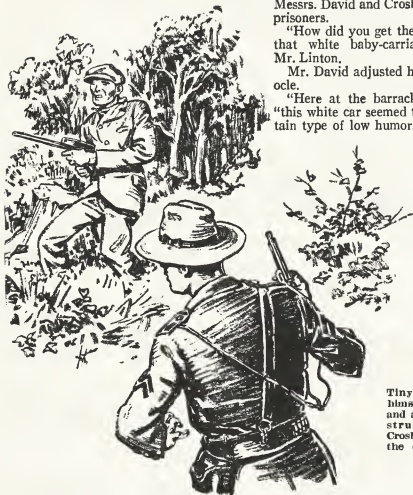
Tiny David moved toward the voice. He disguised his voice:

"Okay!"

The trooper took another step forward. Some clouds moved in the sky, and the rays of the moon filtered among the foliage. The light showed Tiny David that he was close to two men. It also revealed his uniform to the two men.

"That aint Lucky," gasped Stupe. "That's—"

Fisheye raised the sub-machine gun he carried.



Tiny David threw himself upon them, and a life-and-death struggle was on. Crosby vaulted from the car and joined the battle.

Then Tiny David threw himself upon them, and a life-and-death struggle was on. Crosby vaulted from the car, pausing to give a precautionary punch to the figure on the ground near the car, and joined the battle, which thereupon ended abruptly.

The two fishermen held flashlights, while the officers looked over their catch. They searched the unconscious man near the white car. Next to his skin was a belt. Banknotes poured from it.

Tiny David's eyes widened.

"Your camp burglars," he told the fishermen, "are three bank-bandits." He turned to Crosby. "Aint we got fun! Well, the Skipper was right. This was one case where it paid to go back a few thousand years."

Another lively story of Tiny David's exploits will appear in an early issue.

THE teletype had carried word of the capture, and there was a good attendance when the white car pulled up before the barracks early the following morning. Messrs. David and Crosby unloaded their prisoners.

"How did you get them, working with that white baby-carriage?" demanded Mr. Linton.

Mr. David adjusted his invisible monocle.

"Here at the barracks," he declared, "this white car seemed to provoke a certain type of low humor. Various come-

dians pretended to mistake it for a milk-wagon. These three mugs made the same mistake."

Mr. David raised a restraining hand, and continued:

"Not that I blame them. Theirs was an honest mistake. While the low comedians around here—"

"Quite right!" They looked up, to see Captain Field framed in his favorite window. "David and Crosby will remain in barracks. Linton will take that car out on patrol." He smacked his lips with relish. "The local dealer received twelve more of them this morning. Nobody move. I want to pick drivers for them from among you low comedians. You babies are going to get used to those white cars, and you are going to like them."



AGHOST was the hardest enemy in the world to fight, Cadet Peter Grayle was thinking as he stepped into Battery Knox at West Point that morning. The ghost of old Aunt Martha Grayle, his uncle's wife, should have stayed comfortably at home on old "Cap'n Ander" Grayle's South Carolina tobacco plantation beyond the high hills of the Santee—if anybody could ever connect comfort with that gaunt, rigid, uncompromising memory of Peter's boyhood. But here she was riding his neck,—as the Old Man of the Sea rode the neck of Sindbad the Sailor,—right into the historic battleground of West Point's cadets in their fist-fights. He could hear her voice, just as if those harsh tones were sounding in his ear.

"The Lord be thanked, Peter, you've got more of your mother than your father in you! This Grayle family and their fightin'! They broke your mother's heart with it. Praise be, when the good Lord took her to His bosom, I got the raisin' of you. You won't spend *your* life between traipsin' this earth shootin' at folks and gettin' shot at, and then if you're spared, spend your last years sittin' around and talkin' about it, and quarrelin' with your neighbors. Not that many Grayles died in their beds, at that!"

Then an involuntary grin curled the corners of his lips that had been set in a line as straight and uncompromising as Aunt Martha's own. For you couldn't

think of Aunt Martha in life, or her ghost after death, doing anything as undignified as riding a man's neck, without grinning. And that grin helped him shove back the fear that was crowding him close. The worst of all fears: the fear that he was going to be afraid. For the minute Cadet Peter Grayle stepped into Battery Knox, he knew that he was in for the licking of his life. And it takes all the courage any man has, to face that, when he knows it in advance.

Over in a far corner of that square of close-cropped turf of the ancient gun-emplacement, a square almost exactly the size of a prize-ring, two cadet seconds were stripping Cadet John Harkford to the waist. Just as, in another moment, his own two seconds would be stripping Cadet Peter Grayle.

The voice of one of those seconds, Cadet Donald Curry, suddenly sounded, low and fierce, in Peter Grayle's ear.

"I'm going to protest to the referee! The limit weight-difference is ten pounds, and they knew it better than we do! Look what they're ringing in on us. This'll be murder!"

Peter Grayle didn't recognize his own voice as, equally fierce, he answered.

"You say one word to that referee, and the next fight here is you and me, Don! I don't care if he's big as an elephant. I don't care if he hits the way a mule kicks. Get this thing started!"

"One-man Suicide Club, hunh?" said Donald Curry, his voice vibrant with in-



Feud's End



*A short novel of West Point and the
old Army—by the able author of
"Two Yards of Soldier."*

By MEIGS FROST

dignation. "Well, Pete, I admire your sand, but you could shoot me for what I think of your judgment."

But Peter Grayle wasn't even listening to him. A hot flush had driven the clammy chill from his body. He was looking fixedly at his official enemy across that square of turf: his official enemy, who happened to be his worst personal enemy as well. And that involuntary grin had come back to the corners of Peter's lips. For one tiny part of his brain, that seemed to him always to be like another man inside him, had just summoned the ghost of a French general long dead, to chase the ghost of Aunt Martha back to her South Carolina plantation graveyard where she belonged: The ghost of Napoleon Bonaparte's general who looked at his own knees, trembling uncontrollably, at the start of a battle, and told them: "Knees, if you knew where I'm going to take you before this day's over, you'd tremble worse than that!"

BATTERY KNOX was a picture of utter peace, save for the tense figures of the low-voiced cadets, Peter saw—the way most battlefields were, before the shooting started. The rays of the rising sun were just touching Storm King's crest. Mists as opalescent as mother-of-pearl floated yet over the surface of the Hudson River far below. Birds in the trees were just starting their morning chorus. The two black old muzzle-loading cannon George Washington had placed there in the American Revolution seemed to drowse, as they had drowsed through the years since Continental cannoneers trod

that square of turf, while their officers through long spyglasses looked down the Hudson for the topsails of the British fleet. Reveille was a full hour away. Officially, all the United States Military Academy, save the sentries, was sound asleep.

All was ready now. Cadet sentries were posted at all approaches to Battery Knox, to give warning if authority came near. The cadet referee strode silently over to the corner where Peter stood stripped to the waist, bare-fisted, clad only in gray uniform trousers, socks and black uniform shoes.

"Ready, Mister?" he asked.

"Ready, sir," said Peter Grayle.

"Two-minute rounds. Two-minute rests. To the finish. Come out of your corner fighting." His voice was crisp and commanding, as befitted an upper-classman.

"Very well, sir."

The cadet time-keeper, watch in one hand, heavy stick in the other, raised the stick and smote the black butt of the nearest Revolutionary cannon. It rang dully. That was the bell.

Bare fists clenched and cocked awkwardly—for, thanks to Aunt Martha, he had never had a fight in his life, Cadet Peter Grayle came out of his corner prepared to do the best he could before the inevitable end.

For the deck was stacked against the plebe who was fighting "for the honor of the class of 1902." It wasn't often the deck was stacked at West Point. But this was one of those times.

Out to meet him came Cadet John Harkford, yearling of the class of 1901,

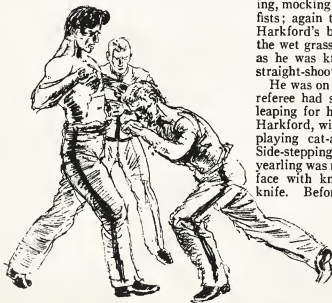
and nearly twenty pounds heavier than his plebe opponent, in violation of all unwritten laws governing these call-out class fights. Line-ripping guard on the Army football varsity in the days when it was five yards for a first down and three downs to make it. Slugging boxer in the West Point gymnasium, where no opponent ever had stood before him more than three rounds. But above all, John Harkford of South Carolina was the bitterest personal enemy of Peter Grayle, whose family's home had been South Carolina since before the American Revolution, but whose appointment to West Point was from Florida because of the Grayle-Harkford family feud. Yet these class fights were supposed to be utterly impersonal.

They met in the middle of that dew-wet square of turf. Peter Grayle, that involuntary grin yet curving the corners of his lips, summoned all his strength and swung with his right. His fist thudded on the ribs of his enemy.

A grin twisted Cadet Harkford's face too. It was a grin of mockery. He fainted twice, and then shot a straight left to Grayle's chin.

The dew-wet grass felt chill against his naked back as Peter opened his eyes. The cadet referee was bending over him, arm rising and falling, counting out loud.

"— Six — seven — eight — nine —" sounded in Grayle's ears. He knew what that meant. With a terrific effort he scrambled to his feet, his head whirling, and raised his fists in self-defence. He was up before "ten" had been spoken,



thank God, he told himself. There was Harkford's face, with that mocking grin.

Peter rushed at it, fists flailing. He felt them thud into Harkford's ribs again. Then a pile-driving right smote him in the stomach, and as he doubled over a smashing left shot for his chin. His doubling over was an involuntary but effective duck. The blow landed high. Bare knuckles gashed his face at the cheek-bone. It stung him but it didn't stun him. He had staggered back from the impact, but he bored in again. Something squashed gratifyingly as a wild swing connected. He saw blood start from Harkford's nose. Another darting left jab rocked him. Then came the dull sound of stick smiting cannon-butt. The first round was over.

"Boy, are you staying with him!"

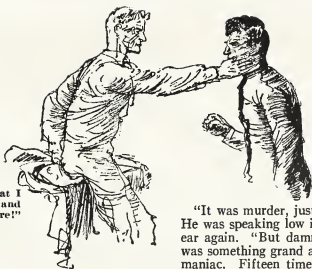
That was Don Curry's voice sounding in his ear. The pride and praise in it would have thrilled him once. It never even touched him now. All his being was centered on one fierce desire; to smash and batter that mocking face some more; to feel his fists thud into those ribs again.

Water splashed on him. Wet towels slid across his gashed face. Hot fingers, shaking excitedly, kneaded the muscles of his chest and arms and the back of his neck. Then the bell cut it short.

Peter Grayle's gaunt six feet and hundred and seventy pounds were out there in the ring once more. The stamina of his twenty years of clean living on Florida farm and South Carolina plantation was carrying him with a rush straight to the spot where he could reach that sneering, mocking face. Again he swung both fists; again they landed with a thud on Harkford's barrel-like ribs. And again the wet grass felt cool to his naked back as he was knocked flat by that deadly straight-shooting left.

He was on his feet this time before the referee had started his count. He was leaping for his enemy once more. And Harkford, with practiced foot-work, was playing cat-and-mouse with him now. Side-stepping Grayle's wild rushes, the yearling was marking his man, cutting his face with knuckles that slashed like a knife. Before the round ended, Peter

It was merciless, but
it couldn't be stopped
—not under the cadet
code of the time.



Illustrated
by
Lyle Justis

"This is what I
think of you and
your signature!"

Grayle was seeing his enemy through a red mask.

It was merciless, but it couldn't be stopped—not under the cadet code of the time. Into the eighth round it went before Harkford once more doubled the plebe over with a driving left to the belly, and the crack of his right uppercut on the plebe's chin was the crack of bone on bone, and the blessing of complete oblivion descended on Cadet Peter Grayle. . . .

The sheets on the bed in the cadet hospital felt gratefully cool, and his head was resting on a pillow, he discovered with complete surprise. But his face felt funny, and it hurt a lot when he tried to speak. Voice sounded funny, too.

"I'd give my voice a rest, son," said the Army doctor who stood over him. "Your room-mate here can do the talking for you. Now—what happened?"

Cadet Peter Grayle sat up suddenly in bed, amid an upheaval of sheets and blankets.

"Nobody'll do the talking for me, sir," he said thickly. "I had an accident, sir. Fell down. Nobody to blame but myself."

"Well, now, that's fine! That explains it perfectly!" The Army doctor grinned a very human grin. "I can make my report with complete clarity, not to mention brevity. Might interest you to know that Cadet Harkford had an accident too. He's in the next room. Fell down hard, by the looks of it. Curious coincidence. You boys ought to watch your step a little more carefully. Now you take a long rest, son. Looks as if you'd earned it."

He departed. Cadet Donald Curry leaned over the bed. His eyes were shining through a most unmilitary mist. His hand rested on Cadet Grayle's shoulder.

"It was murder, just the way I said." He was speaking low in his room-mate's ear again. "But damn you, Pete, there was something grand about you, you old maniac. Fifteen times he knocked you flat. Eight rounds before the knock-out. Only man in West Point ever stood up to him that long. And boy, did you mark him! His nose is flat; he's got two of the finest shiners in history, and his ribs look like a red Indian's. I've got to run now, Pete, but I'll be back."

"Wait a minute, Don," said Peter Grayle. "How did I get up here?"

"We had to carry you. You were out so cold we couldn't bring you back with buckets of water. All the sawbones just did was sew up five gashes in your face. But you went down boring in on Harkford and swinging at him, and the class is proud of you."

"Anybody see you bringing me here?"

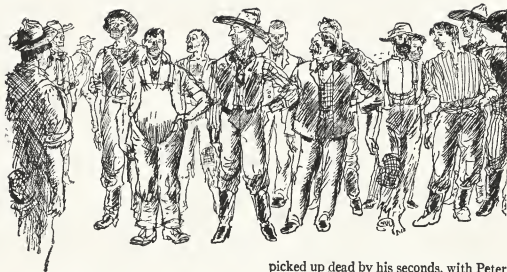
"Plenty. But they're gentlemen. They looked the other way."

And Cadet Curry was on his way to his day's schedule.

NEARLY three weeks Cadet Peter Grayle lay in that bed, his young body recuperating from that terrific beating. You can do a lot of thinking in three weeks. He had plenty to think about.

The strange little corner of his brain that was like another man inside Peter Grayle kept showing him pictures. He had to look at them. He wondered which one of those persons in those pictures had first used the phrase "the profession of arms" in his hearing. He couldn't remember when he hadn't known those words; when they hadn't been the magnetic pole toward which the compass of his ambitions pointed straight.

Ever since there was an America with white men in it, it seemed to him, there had been a Peter Grayle, fighting somewhere in the New World. The first of them had come in his red coat with gold facings, Colonel Peter Grayle of the royal colony with its capital at Charleston,



even before there was a South Carolina and a North Carolina. There was Captain Peter Grayle, who fought with the forces of Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, in the American Revolution. There was young Lieutenant Peter Grayle, who had stood with Jackson behind the ramparts at New Orleans in the War of 1812. There was another Captain Peter Grayle who had led his troop at Palo Alto, and, changing to infantry, had climbed the walls when Americans took Chapultepec in the war with Mexico.

Then there was his own father, Major Peter Grayle, of Hagood's First South Carolina Infantry, C.S.A. He had come back to South Carolina after Appomattox, hung his sword on the wall, and started plowing his wide acres beyond the high hills of the Santee, with his own hands holding the plow drawn by the mule he had ridden home.

BUT though his sword hung on the wall, his heavy Navy revolver always was loaded, cleaned and oiled. And he spoke his mind openly, as did other honorable and courageous men, at the injury to his State in Reconstruction days by the Carpetbaggers who came down from the North, and by certain Southerners who joined hands with them, to become known in history as Scalawags.

That was one reason Sheriff Frank Harkford, one of those Scalawags, had led his political posse out to arrest Major Peter Grayle and try him before a court where the dice were loaded and the cards stacked, in advance, on charges of inciting to rebellion. The other reason was that Sheriff Harkford's own father, who had challenged Peter Grayle to a duel in Charleston before the war, had been

picked up dead by his seconds, with Peter Grayle's bullet in his heart, under the moss-hung oaks of the dueling ground.

When the smoke cleared away after that attempted arrest, Sheriff Frank Harkford lay dead too, and Major Peter Grayle was riding south with the scattered posse in hot pursuit. He had eluded them. Far south in Manatee, Florida,—a frontier then,—he settled, and became a planter and merchant. There he had wedded the gentle daughter of the Presbyterian minister. There the next Peter Grayle was born. And there, at seven, young Peter was left fatherless and motherless when yellow fever swept the little town.

That was when Captain Andrew Grayle, his uncle, came south to Florida and brought the orphan lad back to the South Carolina country beyond the high hills of the Santee to rear as his own son. "Cap'n Ander," his old friends called him, as his wife was "Aunt Martha" to them. Cap'n Ander had led his company of the South Carolina Infantry, C.S.A., from the bombardment of Fort Sumter to the Battle of Bentonville, which was two weeks after Lee surrendered at Appomattox. And Aunt Martha, weary of the war-talk that she had known through the years, had determined that one Peter Grayle should be reared as a man of peace. She would have the molding of him. She destined him for the ministry.

She died in the belief that she was succeeding. For under her tutelage the gentleness of his mother, the studious and scholarly brain of his mother's father, seemed to come uppermost. But with her passing, the heritage of the boy's father and his father's fathers rose to the surface and took control. He studied even harder at the University of North Carolina, where at Aunt Martha's de-



"Fall in!" roared Hartson. "Right dress!"

mand Cap'n Ander had sent him. Then, suddenly, he disappeared.

Cap'n Ander didn't worry when the news came to him from the university authority at Chapel Hill to the South Carolina plantation. He learned from the bank that Peter had drawn out his small inheritance.

"Any colt needs to kick up his legs, I reckon," chuckled Cap'n Ander to a couple of his old cronies. "Do him good. Get some o' the natural hell outa his system."

But Cap'n Ander was surprised as Aunt Martha would have been, when weeks later young Peter came driving out to the plantation in a livery rig.

"I've made it, Cap'n Ander!" the youngster shouted joyously, as he rushed at the veteran and wrung his hand.

"Made what?" asked Cap'n Ander dryly. "Yo' peace with Gawd, or yo' fortune playin' poker, or a record drinkin' red lickin' an' hellin' around?"

"My appointment to West Point!" There was the joy of fulfillment shining in the lad's eyes. "Our old Congressman down in Florida was Dad's friend. He had an appointment. Threw it open to competitive examination at Tallahassee. Said if he'd known I wanted it, he'd have given it to me without examination. But I took that examination with twenty-eight other candidates. And I came out first, Cap'n Ander! I'm going to West Point. Look!" He drew a treasured paper from his inner coat pocket. "My passport to the profession of arms!"

Cap'n Ander was mildly meditative.

"Sho' aint easy t' keep a squirrel on the ground, son, though yore Aunt Martha tried mighty hard," he said. "If I'd 'a' thought yo' was goin' thataway, I reckon I'd 'a' taken a hand in yo' raisin' mo'n' I did. Had some things sorta diff'rent.

Well, it's a Yankee school, but theah's worse. It turned out Robert E. Lee and Gen'ral Beauregard. Mighty good officers; and I fought under both. Come in; let's have a toddy and some suppeh."

They talked long after that meal.

"Need any money, son?"

"No, thanks, Cap'n Ander."

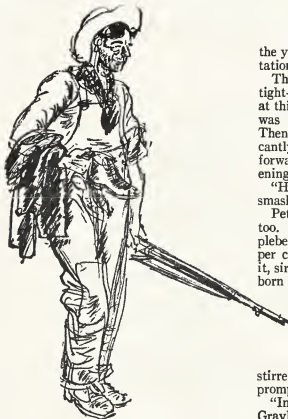
"Well, call on me if yo' do. Price of tobacco's right good these days. 'Stead of the bank ownin' me, I'm gettin' mighty near ownin' the bank. Anotheh thing: Don't know whethah yo' know it or not, but the nephew o' that Sheriff Frank Harkford yo' daddy shot an' killed befo' yo' was born, he went up to West Point this year. He'll be a year ahead o' yo'. Harkfords and Grayles don't get along togetheh any too well, but I don't reckon that need worry yo' much if yo' behave yo'self. All the advice I can give yo' is, don't yo' take nothin' from no man yo' figgeh yo' daddy or me wouldn't take."

They went to bed on that. And at breakfast, just before Peter's departure, old Cap'n Ander spoke again.

"Seen a bit o' fightin' in my time, son," he said, almost apologetically. "Thinkin' it oveh last night in bed, I figgehed, way yore Aunt Martha raised yo', yo' might not get the right picture o' what a fightin' man goes up against. Yo' heah a lot about heroes. Folks tell yo' 'bout men they say neveh knew fear. Known a lot o' good fightin' men. Seen 'em in action. Only men I knew never admitted they got scared some time or otheh, they was too damn' stupid to scare, or such damn' liars they wouldn't admit it. No man eveh knows just how he'll behave under fire until he's seen somebody startin' shootin' directly at him. Just like he neveh knows how he'll behave in a fist-fight until he's been in one. Man comes o' good stock, he usually comes out all right afteh the ruckus starts. 'Bout the worst fear he's got to fight is bein' afraid he's goin' to be afraid. But if I was eveh handin' out medals, it'd be to the man who's afraid an' admits it to himsef—an' goes ahead an' does what he's got to do, regardless."

SO with memories of Aunt Martha's teachings and Cap'n Ander's advice strangely mingled in his brain, Peter Grayle started for West Point.

Cap'n Ander was uppermost that night in "beast barracks" where the incoming plebes awaited issuance of uniforms and equipment. In the West Point of the 1890's, beast barracks were the happy



hunting-ground of the yearlings; they plebes their legitimate prey.

Filled yet with the thrill that at last he was part of the historic school, Cadet Peter Grayle sat quietly in his room, thinking over the West Point lore that had been pumped into him by Cadet Donald Curry, son of a regular army officer and West Pointer of a generation before. Into the room unceremoniously burst a group of yearlings.

"Brace, Mister!" sounded the command of their leader.

PETER rigidly snapped to attention—threw his shoulders back, arched out his chest, "sucked in his stomach," held in his chin, and stood more rigid than ever, awaiting the next move.

"Where are you from, Mister?"

"Manatee, Florida."

"Manatee, Florida, *what!*" The last word cracked like a pistol-shot.

He knew the answer to that, too, but some unexpected devil stirred behind his impassive face, and he answered;

"Manatee, Florida, United States of America."

"Manatee, Florida, *sir!*" instructed the yearling spokesman in the voice of an angry drill sergeant.

"Manatee, Florida, *sir!*" Peter's answer snapped back right on the heels of

the yearling's last word, and in exact imitation of his voice and tone.

The yearlings, trim and taut in their tight-fitting cadet gray uniforms, looked at this gaunt and ununiformed plebe who was kidding them at their own game. Then they looked at each other significantly. Their spokesman thrust his face forward. His voice was a savage, threatening growl.

"How'd you like to have your face smashed, Mister?"

Peter Grayle knew the answer to that, too. It was an answer generations of plebes had found satisfactory to their upper classmen. It was: "I wouldn't like it, sir." But again that unexpected devil, born of old Cap'n Ander's last words,

"Yo' might's well look fo' a hawss-thief in heaven as look fo' speed in this yere War Department," grinned Buck.

stirred behind Peter's impassive face and prompted him.

"Immaterial, sir!" said Cadet Peter Grayle.

The yearlings, taken unexpectedly, looked at him and at one another again, and abruptly left the room. And in his heart, Cadet Peter Grayle knew what was going to happen. . . .

It happened a few days later. The cadets were in summer camp, off the historic parade-ground. Peter was seated happily on the floor of his tent, polishing a bit of equipment, when the committee of yearlings entered, solemn, stiff, formal as ambassadors on a visit of state.

"Mr. Grayle," said his spokesman, "I am sorry that our class has met and decided to call you out. . . . Will you please name your seconds?"

"Mr. Donald Curry and Mr. Robert Gordon, sir," said Peter. And as the yearlings left with rigid formality, again part of him rejoiced and part of him shivered. He was the first man of his class to be called out by the yearlings. That was a fighting distinction. They had held their class meeting and picked him as the outstanding "B. J. Plebe" who needed trimming down. In West Point slang, a "B. J. Plebe" was a first-year man who had held himself stiff-necked and looked his upper classmen in the eye while they had been giving him mental hazing, and so had been labeled "fresh" by the yearlings.

And now, as soon as details were arranged, he must stand face-to-face with

the pick of the yearlings, who should not outweigh him by more than ten pounds, and slug it out until one of them was knocked cold. And the youth who never had been in a fist-fight in his life shivered a trifle at that.

THOSE details were soon arranged. That night selected classmates stayed awake, to be sure to awaken principals, seconds, referee, time-keeper, cadet sentries, an hour before reveille. One by one they dressed and left their tents, to go to the only place a cadet could go at any hour without question. That was the big lavatory West Point slang had christened "the sink," on the crest of the cliff that rose up from the Hudson River. Part way down that cliff was the historic Revolutionary gun emplacement of Battery Knox.

The first cadet of the party to enter the sink removed the iron grating from the riverward window. Then he crawled through, hung for a moment by his fingers, and dropped to the projecting ledge in the face of the bluff a few feet below. A few silent steps from that point brought him into Battery Knox. One by one the others followed him into that classic battleground of cadet fist-fights for generations.

Picture after picture, those were the scenes that kept unrolling before Peter Grayle's eyes during those days in the West Point hospital. They were strangely comforting to him. If this was the price of entry into the profession of arms, he meditated, he had paid in full. The receipt was written in the healing scars on his face. And the old involuntary grin came back to his face at the thought that never again, as long as he lived, would he even be afraid of being afraid as far as a man-to-man combat with bare fists was concerned. He knew now he was going to be the hardest student the boxing instructor in the West Point gymnasium ever had. Next time he faced John Harkford, the story might be different. He knew in his heart there would be a next time.

But while the heritage of his fathers in him rejoiced at the thought, that imaginative, sensitive heritage from his mother's side of the family kept nudging at him.

"Fists are one thing," it whispered in his ear. "But how are you going to behave when it's guns? What'll you do when somebody starts shooting directly at you?"



Muddled confusion is no strange condition for young masculine minds. Peter Grayle, had he known it, merely was suffering from an acute attack of the uncertainties that many an imaginative youth merging into manhood must undergo. Stretched there idle in hospital, all the old tales of battle he had heard told among Cap'n Ander and his cronies through the early years of his boyhood came back to him. Tales of men with belly-wounds begging piteously for water, begging even more piteously to be put out of their agony by their own comrades. Tales of bullies who had slugged their way through the peaceful life of camp, but who cringed when the shooting started, and became the butt of ridicule of the very men, their physical inferiors, whom they had hammered into submission in those fist-fights that are part of every camp of men. Tales of colonels who had led their regiments before their first battle, and who were to be found far behind the fighting lines toward the end, doing paper work, while those regiments were led through Homeric fighting by men who had started as inconspicuous privates, but who possessed that magic wand of undisputed courage in the face of wounds and death.

In which class was he, Peter wondered dumbly. If he won his commission, would it be to flinch when the great test of the profession of arms came to him? Would it be better to resign from West Point before such a thing happened, since the fact that he could imagine it must mean that it might happen?



The tale spread of a company of men called now the "Texas Tarantulas."

Then his decision came quite naturally and simply, as life so often solves problems. It came from his enemy.

Peter Grayle looked up from his bed that morning, as a big figure bulked beside him. He looked up into the face of Cadet John Harkford, which yet bore the marks of the bruises his own fists had left upon it. And as that morning in Battery Knox, Peter Grayle noted that the only two expressions on that face were a scowl or a sneer.

"I just dropped in to tell you, Grayle," said Harkford abruptly, "that you've only got the first installment. There never was room enough in the same State for a Harkford and a Grayle, let alone the same school. We ran you out of South Carolina. Now, by God, I'm going to run you out of West Point. Any time you think you can forget that, take a look in your shaving-mirror. I've left my signature on your face to remind you."

It was as though some force outside him, or deep and hitherto unknown within him, was giving Peter Grayle orders. His legs slid over the bed's edge; his face, still patched with surgeon's plaster, confronted Harkford's face, less than two feet away.

"I used to wonder sometimes why my grandfather shot your grandfather, and why my father shot your uncle, Hark-

ford," he said. "I don't wonder any more. Your breed of skunk needs killing. Damn your cowardly, bullying soul to hell, you couldn't run a baby away from its nursing-bottle without help. Left your signature on my face, did you? I hadn't been here a week before I found out you had to lie to your class about your weight to get a chance at me. Your own class is ashamed of you this minute. This is what I think of you and your signature!"

His palm cracked against Harkford's face with the open-handed slap that is man's supreme gesture of complete contempt for another man. He staggered back from Harkford's swift blow that answered it. His clenched fists came up—and then they dropped to his side. For a harsh voice had sounded in the doorway. There, on inspection, stood Authority itself—the old martinet who never asked quarter of anyone, nor gave it.

That same week the records of Cadet John Harkford of South Carolina and Cadet Peter Grayle of Florida received the official endorsement of: "*Honorably discharged for deficiencies in discipline.*"

"But good God, Peter! What are you going to do now?" asked Cadet Donald Curry as he watched his roommate do his scanty packing.

Through the new grimness that had come to Peter Grayle's face broke a touch of the old involuntary grin.

"Show up Harkford," he said. "He made good on his threat to run me out of West Point. But by the Eternal, he isn't going to cost me my commission! I'm heading West to get it—from the ranks!"

Straight for Washington Peter headed, sought out the Florida Congressman, his father's friend, who had given him his West Point appointment, and told him the whole story. That white-haired veteran nodded understandingly.

"Well, son, what d'you want me to do about it?" he asked at the end. "I might hoss-trade around a little on the Hill and get you a commission in one of these volunteer outfits they're sending out to the Philippines, if you're hell-bent on getting a bolo in your gizzard out there in the cogon grass they tell about."

"No, thanks, sir," said Peter. "I'm not sure I'm fit for a commission yet."

"Son, you'll have a monument raised to you if the old-timers in the War Department ever hear that," chuckled the veteran. "They tell me these days if a man knows the difference between squads east and west, he aint satisfied with nothing less than major."

"If you can only find out some regiment that's going to get orders for the Philippines soon, sir," said Peter. "I want to enlist in it."

"Well, I'll be damned! Maybe you rate two monuments!"

But within twenty-four hours he had news for Peter Grayle.

"Thirty-third Texas Infantry's recruiting out at San Antonio, son," he said. "Low-down at the War Department is they'll be on their way to Manila mighty soon. You can enlist for that outfit right here in Washington, if you want."

"Fine! Thanks, sir," said Peter. And before nightfall he was Private Peter Grayle of the Thirty-third Texas Infantry, his transportation in his pocket to join his command.

But before he boarded his train he wrote a letter addressed to Harkford at his South Carolina home. It was brief:

"You won the first round in Battery Knox. The second round looks like a draw to me, for you're out of West Point too. Now, damn you, I've started out to get the commission you think you cost me. I enlisted today in the Thirty-third Texas Infantry. I'm leaving for San Antonio tonight. If you think you're man enough to stop me or beat me to it, this is your invitation to help yourself."

He was very young. But he had made up his mind on one point. Whatever he had to face after this, he was not going to wait for it to come to him. He was going out to meet it. . . .

"Headquarters Thirty-third Texas Infantry? Right here, dude! I'm it!"

There was little that was military and plenty that was tough about the bulky man in gray flannel shirt, overalls and dusty brogans who mimicked Private Peter Grayle's military query.

"Private Peter Grayle reporting for duty, sir," said the new recruit.

"The hell you say! Aguinaldo's the same as licked right now, I reckon." The bulky man surveyed Peter's trim civilian suit, his derby hat, his suitcase. "You're just in time to save your regiment. Dude, you go peel spuds. Buck, take him over to the mess shack."

Peter's face remained masklike. He saluted and followed his guide, a weathered man also in overalls and gray flannel shirt, his feet shod in cowboy boots with rundown heels. He heard the bulky man's snicker as he walked away.

"Who is he?" he asked his guide when they were some distance.

"Name's Bill Hartson. Sorta straw boss for the regiment. Officers out recruitin'. Where you from, bud?"

"Back East," said Peter briefly.

"You sure as hell got yourself mixed up with a gang of rannies who figure Chicago and St. Louis is too far east for them," said his new brother-in-arms. They had come to a palm-thatched roof supported by four corner poles, and with no walls at all. Flies buzzed thickly about quarters of beef unprotected as they lay on a rough board trestle. Fire-pits filled with ashes, and roughly stacked cordwood near by, showed where the cooking was done. The greasiest, dirtiest white human being Peter had ever seen in his life stood absently scratching his ribs with the blunt end of a butcher-knife sharpening-steel.

"Hi, cook," said Peter's guide. "Here's the spud-peelin' champ of the Waldorf-Astoria come to show you how."

"Dive in an' he'p yo'se'f, rooky," said the cook, indicating a pile of unpeeled potatoes on the ground beside a battered wash-tub. And Private Grayle started peeling spuds.

HIS fingers were cramped, his hands sore, his back lame from this form of labor by the time he had finished peeling that young mountain of spuds, and

had washed the pots, pans and buckets a lot cleaner than the cook who used them. But his belly was lined with a load of slumgullion, "slum" for short, that the cook had stewed up for supper. That mess of beef, potatoes, onions and canned tomatoes, with issue bread and coffee, seemed the limit of the cook's menu.

PRIVATE PETER GRAYLE was rolling a cigarette clumsily, for "the makings" were all he could find, when Buck Reilly, who had guided him to the cook on his arrival, strolled past.

"How're yuh makin' out, dude?" he asked.

"Fine, thanks," said Peter.

"Think a li'l snort o' tequila might make yo' feel a li'l mo' peart?"

"It might help," grinned Peter.

"They's a Greaser got some in a *jacal* t'otheh side that arroyo back o' camp. Come along, waddie. Yo' sho' look lak hell with the folks moved out."

And over the tequila, Peter listened while Buck painted a word-picture of this new outfit.

The Thirty-third Texas Volunteer Infantry was rough, tough, hard to curry below the knees and proud of it, Peter gathered, as Buck's drawl rambled along. Cowboys, miners, sheep-herders, mountaineers, plainsmen, farmers, small-town store clerks, they were waiting yet for issue of uniforms and equipment while their officers were out recruiting. Some, like Buck, were in overalls, flannel shirts, and cowboy boots; others wore the same working uniform of the West, but brogans on their feet. Still others were in rags. Some even were barefooted.

"I wouldn't say they was handsome as a ace-full on kings," grinned Buck. "But they look to me lak they's gritty as a sweatin' hawss afteh it done rolled in the sand. They'll look betteh, come time they get some uniforms an' guns. But yo' might's well look fo' a hawss-thief in heaven as look fo' speed in this yere War Department we got in Washington City."

"My turn to buy, isn't it?" asked Peter, chuckling at Buck's way of putting things. "Have another?"

"Sure will, dude. Say, how-come you pick this outfit to enlist in, way back East?"

There was all the difference in the world between the way Buck said "dude" and the way Hartson said it, Peter noted.

"Why, I heard back East that this outfit was slated to go to Manila ahead of most of the others," he said. "So I en-

listed right there. Doesn't look much like it, though, does it?"

"Don't look like it, for a fact," agreed Buck, "but it's true. Colonel's one o' the old Reguleh Army, an' he's got his political connections in Washington City. Got a promise they'll send his outfit across, minute it's recruited up to war strength. That's why he an' all his officers are spread out all oveh Texas right now, recruitin'."

Two solid weeks passed, and they stayed out recruiting, and every day of those two weeks Private Peter Grayle peeled spuds and scoured pots and pans in the mess-shack, a sort of permanent kitchen police. Hartson was riding the Eastern dude hard, and waiting for him to kick about it. But Peter's jaw stayed grimly clamped. He ate his rations, and he peeled his spuds and thumped his pots and pans, and in between he took his drill without uniform or gun and kept his face straight and impassive.

It needed deliberate effort not to laugh at that drill. The temporary drill-master had been the cook in a cavalry regiment of the Regular Army, but he had been out of the service more than ten years. And he was drilling these infantry rookies by his ragged memories of long-obsolete cavalry foot drill.

BUT Private Grayle was hardening and filling out under it all. And the day came when an orderly stood before him with a curt:

"Captain Reese wants to see you, rooky."

Captain Reese proved to be trim, soldierly, and a friend. More than that, a friend of Peter's Congressman.

"Got a letter from the old gentleman, asking me to take a look at you now and then. How are things going with you, Grayle?"

"Quite all right, sir," said Peter, ignoring the dirt and grease that encrusted his civilian clothes, and which he had found it impossible to remove.

"You're not a good liar, kid," grinned Captain Reese. "I did a little checking up before I sent for you. You've been ridden a little rough, I'm afraid. But we'll be organized in about a week or so more. I'm getting Company F. How'd you like to come in with me? I could use a sergeant with a little West Point training."

"I'd like it fine, sir," said Peter. "But I'd rather nobody here but you knew about my having been in West Point."



In that welter of flying fists Company F learned to take it, and to dish it out.

"Haven't mentioned it to anybody else. Won't. You'll have your chevrons, soon's the company's organized. Now, about this spud-peeling I've just learned about: Hartson went too far in his hazing. There 'aint no sich animile' as a lance sergeant; but by the Lord, I'm making you one. Anybody questions it, send 'em to me. That goes for Hartson, too. Lance sergeants don't peel spuds."

"Thanks, sir," said the first and only lance sergeant in United States army history. He was grinning joyously as he strode forth.

"Lance sergeant, hey! Well, I'll be—" And Hartson, the regimental straw-boss, specified several things he would be if ever he had heard of anything like that before. "Captain Reese, hey! All right, Lance Sergeant Grayle, suppose you get the hell outa here and learn some more foot-drill!"

Lance Sergeant Grayle was one pair of legs in a very ragged squads-east-and-west the ex-cavalry cook was drilling on the dusty parade ground, when Hartson reappeared on his horizon, surrounded by a little group of cronies.

"Halt! At ease! Rest!" called the cook-drillmaster as he saw Hartson stride toward him. The ragged line slouched, even raggeder yet. Lance-sergeant Peter Grayle, one of the file-closers, caught the grins on the faces of Hartson's cronies, and guessed something was coming.

"I'll take over, Schmidt," said Hartson. He glanced up and down the double line of what was probably the awkward-est awkward squad in military history.

"Fall in!" roared Hartson suddenly. "Right dress!"

At his "Front!" the double line stood, wavy as the track of a blacksnake in the Texas dust.

"Count off, ten men from the right of line, front rank and rear rank!"

Ragged and uncertain, the numbers came from the volunteers.

"Side-step to the right—*horch!*" Hartson barked. Then: "Halt!"

There the twenty stood, their garb as ragged as their line.

"Now, Lance-sergeant Grayle!" ordered Hartson. "You drill that squad!"

And clearly to Peter's ears came a hoarse voice from the group of cronies Hartson had rejoined: "Now watch that squirt of a dude with a pull get tangled up in his own feet!"

OUT from the line of file-closers marched Lance-sergeant Peter Grayle rigid as a colonel on parade, precise as a hundred-dollar watch. Deep down into his chest he reached for the most rasping drillmaster's voice at his command. He stood facing his squad, memories of West Point drill surging through him.

"Fall in!" rang his voice. He contemplated the result. Rigid, wooden-faced, he marched forward and shoved some of them into position with his hands. Out in front of them he marched again; surveyed them with an icy eye.

"Right, dress!" Again he had to come forward and shove some of them into position; return to his place out in front.

"Front!" More shoving. And at last they stood in a straight line, straighter than ever before. Out in front of them Lance-sergeant Grayle faced them once more. He surveyed them from faces to feet.

"You stand like that, and you expect somebody to mistake you for soldiers!" Words and tone stung like a whiplash. "This is drill in the United States Army, not sick-call in the Old Ladies Home!"

He let that sink in. Then his commands whistled about their ears.

"Heels together! Toes at an angle of sixty degrees! Body erect! Lean slightly forward at the hips! Draw up your stomachs! Little fingers opposite the seams of your trousers! Palms slightly to the front! Elbows close to the body! Head erect! Chin drawn in! Eyes fixed fifteen paces to the front, looking neither to right nor left!"

He inspected them through a silence that seemed to last for minutes, though it lasted for seconds only.

"This," he said at last, "is the first time I've seen anybody in this outfit look like a soldier since I hit camp. Now, every man of you, remember the way you're standing. That's the way you stand when you hear the command: 'Atten-shun!' You'll hear it plenty in this man's army. If you can do it like this, you could face all the generals we've got on inspection the same day."

He glanced over his shoulder at Hartson and his group of cronies.

"Over here back of me," he told his men, "is a gang came out here to laugh their heads off watching a dude squirt with a pull make you men fall over your own feet. They were willing to make monkeys out of you, trying to make a monkey out of me. Now suppose we show 'em who is making monkeys out of who. Forwa-a-a-rd—*horch!*"

THIRTY full minutes without respite under that blazing sun he drilled them, with the squad drill that was as instinctive as his own breathing to any cadet who ever sweated in the old area at West Point. Then with swinging stride he marched them up to a spot some thirty paces from where Hartson and his cronies stood, and stopped them with the ringing: "Halt!"

"Any further orders, sir?" he asked.

"No," said Hartson, still wearing his eyes on stems.

Lance-sergeant Grayle executed a perfect about-face and looked at his men.

"You did fine!" he said. "At ease! If you'll hold yourselves down to two schooners apiece at the Dutchman's beer-shack, I can pay for that much cold beer. Tell him I'll be there before you're into your second schooner. Dismiss!"

They broke ranks with a disorganized yell of joy, and raced for the beer-shack like schoolboys let out at recess. Peter Grayle turned and faced Hartson, still in the midst of his cronies.

"I'm paying for that beer, as I promised the men," he said; "but if you're a man instead of a four-flusher, you'll admit right here and now the drinks are on you."

"Big boy," said Hartson with a sheepish grin, "you're a soldier. I aint even goin' to ask where you learned what you know. Let's be friends."

Peter was grinning too, as he gripped the grimy hand Hartson thrust out, and felt the thumps of Hartson's cronies on his shoulders while their laughter roared skyward.

"By Gawd, Bill Hartson," husked an ex-cowboy from the Texas Panhandle, "he done called yore bluff, that kid. The drinks are on yo', all right, if yo're a man instead of a ranny with a yellow streak so wide it wraps plumb around yore brisket-bone!"

AT last the slow-moving War Department turned over in its sleep, woke up, rubbed its eyes and did something. Uniforms, underwear, socks, shoes, shirts and blankets arrived. Cases of Krag-Jorgensen rifles; more cases with ammunition for them. Tents and the equipment of an infantry regiment. Wide-brimmed soft felt slouch hats. The Thirty-third Texas Volunteer Infantry began to look like soldiers.

Officers returned from recruiting; companies were organized. Under Captain Reese, Peter Grayle found himself a sergeant, and within a week, first sergeant of Company F. He was working like a demon now. The long hours of it, the solid Army food, were filling him out and hardening him until he was a hundred and ninety-seven pounds of bone and lean muscle. He was going to have his share in making Company F the finest in that regiment, or know the reason why. And night after night, with battered old boxing-gloves they had promoted in San Antonio, he went out behind the company latrine and learned all he could of boxing from Private Mike Rafferty, whose flattened nose and cauliflower ears told eloquently of his days as a middle-weight in Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, and cities of the Pacific Coast.

They had finished their workout one night, just before tattoo. They had sluiced each other with buckets of water, towed and changed to dry things, to stroll back to their tents, each with a bundle of sweat-soaked clothing under his arm, when Captain Reese's orderly came up to First Sergeant Grayle.

"Top," he said, "the skipper wants yuh. Yuh got a caller he's entertainin' in his tent till yuh show up."

"Drop these by my cot, Mike, will you?" said Peter, handing over his bundle of clothes, and started straight down the company street for the tents of officers' row at the head. Who the devil could be calling on him in camp? He couldn't imagine. Thoughts of Uncle Ander and his friends he dismissed instantly. There was no reason for any of them to be as far west as San Antonio. Could his Florida Congressman be out here on some Congressional committee junket?

Captain Reese met him outside the company commander's tent, with a quick, "At ease!" as First Sergeant Grayle came to attention and saluted. Then with a silent gesture, he led Peter some steps away from the tent-fly.

"There's a big citizen inside says his name is Harkford and he wants to see you on something very personal, Peter," said the company skipper. "My guess is he's the man you had the trouble with at the Point. Anything I can do to help?"

"No sir," said Peter, his heart leaping suddenly within him, "except to let me see him."

"Go on in. I'll wait outside." And as Peter started for the tent: "If there's any fighting, I'd suggest behind the latrine instead of in the company commander's tent."

"There won't be any fighting in your tent, sir," grinned Peter. Then his face, scarred with Harkford's fists, grew taut as he strode in under the canvas.

"Well, Harkford?" he said.

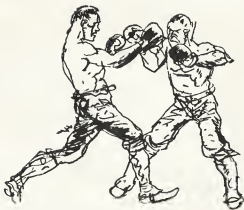
The tall figure of the West Point yearling rose from a camp-chair.

"That little love-letter you wrote me before you started West traveled around quite a ways before it caught up with me, Grayle," he said. "But I got it at last. I'm accepting your invitation. Third round coming up, according to your own schedule. I'm enlisting in this outfit, and I'm staying with it till I show you up."

His eyes scanned Peter's sleeve, with its chevrons.

"First sergeant already, I see," he said. "Well, that gives you a little edge, doesn't it? Sort of equalizes the weight advantage you claim I had in Battery Knox."

"The weight advantage I claim you had—" Something hot and fierce surged in Peter Grayle, to be checked instant-



ly by something stronger yet. That something was the discipline under which he had been living for weeks, but he wasn't veteran enough to recognize it. All he knew was that suddenly, happily, a road lay before him, wide open and straight, down which he and his enemy could travel, race, fight.

"Listen, Harkford," he said, "if you've got guts enough, and the skipper'll take you, come into my company. And I'll bet you a year's pay I have a commission before you do, if you don't shoot me in the back first."

"I ought to knock your head off for that, Grayle," said Harkford.

"We can go out in back any time you want," flashed Peter. "You're a civilian yet. This'll be a little different from Battery Knox, I'm giving you fair warning."

"It can wait," said Harkford. "I want to get into this company first. Knocking the head off his first sergeant wouldn't help me too much with the company commander."

"Suppose you let the company commander speak for himself." It was the voice of Captain Reese as he strode into the tent. "Call it snooping if you want, but I've been standing under the tent-fly, and you two birds weren't whispering. When I'm taking an outfit into the action this outfit is going to see out in the *bosque* after we leave Manila, I aim to know what's going on inside 'em."

He surveyed the two men.

"I might as well tell you, Harkford," he said crisply, "that I know how things stand between you and First Sergeant Grayle—but he didn't tell me. I knew it before I ever laid eyes on you. I've heard you tell him what you plan to do. I've heard him invite you to fly at it. I've also heard him make you a bet, and I haven't heard yet whether you took him up or crawled. . . . Wait a minute!"

His raised hand silenced Harkford.



"Forward, battalion!" he roared. The ruse worked; the Filipinos fled; and on their heels raced the point of ten men.

"If you want to enlist in this company, I'll see you get your wish, if you'll abide by conditions I make."

"What are they?" grated Harkford.

"All the cards face up on the table. No dealing off the bottom of the deck. You want to show him up, you say. Only two ways you can do that, fair and square. One is by showing you've got more sand than he has, when the shooting starts. The other is by Grayle taking off his chevrons and you licking him so bad he has to holler calf-ropes in front of his own men. I give you my word you'll have your chance to do that in front of the whole company, after the shooting's over. But you've got to give me your word that up to the time I say you two can fight it out with your fists, you'll play ball with this outfit, which includes him, and soldier like a man. You know what I mean: None of the tricks any soldier knows, to throw a monkey-wrench in the works; no undermining talk down the company street. And I'll add this: If you can show me you've got the nerve and brains that'll make you a better top-cutter than he is, you'll be wearing the chevrons. Now, Harkford, are you man enough to do that while we're finishing the job we've signed up to do?"

"Yes, Captain Reese," said Harkford slowly. "That's straight-shooting. You have my word. And"—he swung around toward First Sergeant Grayle—"you've made a bet. The only thing I'm sorry for is they don't pay a second lieutenant as much as a major-general. You'd have that much more grief paying off."

"Fine," said the skipper. "I'm not asking you two to shake hands on it. . . . There goes tattoo, First Sergeant Grayle.

Fix up Harkford here, a cot in the orderly tent. He'll be eating in uniform tomorrow, as soon as the doctor passes him."

The company commander watched the two tall forms swing off for the company street, dimly silhouetted in the lights. A grim little smile quirked his lips.

"With a couple of good healthy hates like that harnessed in this outfit," he said to himself, "and each trying to show the other up, I'm not one damned bit sure old Company F isn't going to make itself a little history, once we get to chasing Gugus back in the *bosque*."

Which indicated that here was a company commander who used his head for something besides a knob on which to hang his campaign hat. Though, at that, Captain Reese couldn't possibly have known how very right he was.

THEY were beginning to look like a regiment, now. Under the Texas sun they drilled and toughened. Most of them had known how to handle their liquor and their weapons before they enlisted. Now they had learned to handle them like soldiers. Nobody would have known it, by his icy gray eyes, but the tough old heart of Colonel McCullough warmed as he watched their lean, tanned ranks swing past in review; warmed even more as he watched them advance in line of skirmishers, far out beyond the regular parade-ground of the camp, taking advantage of every inch of cover, hugging the earth on command, crawling forward on their bellies, menacing rifle-muzzles shoved ahead of them.

Then the orders came: Troop train to San Francisco; up the gangplank aboard

the United States army transport *Sheridan*; out across San Francisco Bay, past Alcatraz, through the Golden Gate. Farewell looks over the stern at the Seven Hills of San Francisco sloping down to the Embarcadero. Then the heave of great Pacific rollers, and the last glimpse of the Farallones slipping astern, and then the long drag over the curve of the world, with battle in jungle and rice-paddy and mountain country at the end of it. They were pawing the decks at the prospect, as is the way of volunteer outfits headed for war.

Then—that crossing became a horror. Even the brief campaign in Cuba hadn't been enough to cut the miles of red tape that had been wound around the War Department since the Civil War ended. Bureaucrats yet hung on. And the automatic answer of the bureaucrat always will be "No!" to all suggestions of improvement carrying lesser penalties for refusal than loss of the bureaucrats' jobs.

Three times a day the "Soupy—soupy—soupy!" call sounded. Three times a day the regiment faced a mess of "slum." Into the steam-cookers the alleged cooks dumped beef and vegetables, and steamed them into a gooey mess, and it was: "Eat it, soldier, and like it, or else—"

But the water was worse. By a decree straight from the throne, drinking-water for the troops was distilled from the salt Pacific waves. It wasn't stored in tanks and cooled. That would have implied common sense somewhere. It dripped hot from the condenser. Thirsty soldiers stood in line and caught the drip in their issue mess-cups. But even then they weren't allowed to take it away and let it cool. Some Great Mind somewhere had issued an order about that. Sentries with rifles and fixed bayonets guarded the condenser outlet. The men caught their cups full of that nauseatingly hot water at stated intervals, and stood right there and drank it hot, or else.

Men sickened. It was September 28, 1899, that the *Sheridan* steamed out of San Francisco. It was October 28, 1899, that the transport steamed into Manila. In those thirty days First Sergeant Peter Grayle of Company F had lost exactly thirty pounds. Hundreds in the regiment were in worse plight than he.

But their physical sickness was as nothing compared to their sickness of spirit in Company F when the order came down to First Sergeant Grayle that day. Their company, of all the regiment, had been picked to go ashore and do a

tour of duty guarding Corregidor Island in Manila Bay, while the rest of the regiment was to go on and be landed at Lingayam, where battle was cooking.

"I could be court-martialed and shot for what I'm thinking," said Captain Reese to First Sergeant Grayle; "but orders are orders."

So ashore went Company F at Manila; and from the wharf to their quarters they had to stop every hundred to two hundred yards and rest, as sick men staggered and lurched under their loads.

OUT to them presently on Corregidor Island came the news of the Battle of San Fabian. The Thirty-third Texas Infantry had distinguished itself, they heard. They took the news in grim and bitter silence. Their regiment! Blooded! Veterans, now, with their baptism of fire. They had seen their own dead. Enemy dead had paid for them. Into the blazing muzzles of Filipino Mausers they had charged; they had routed the Gugs by a frontal attack upon a prepared position.

And Company F of that regiment through all the battle had guarded the island of Corregidor, miles away, like cops back home patrolling a peaceful beat!

Bitter as gall grew the normal daily verbal horseplay.

"And you was with the Thirty-third Texas in the war, Papa?"

"Yes, sonny-boy!"

"And what did you do at the great Battle of San Fabian, Papa?"

"I was on extra-special important duty, sonny-boy. I was one of them gallant Corregidor Cops!"

"O-o-o-h, Papa! Was you one of them heroes of Company F?"

Presently, as the boats plied back and forth between Corregidor and Manila, repercussions from visiting officers told Captain Reese that the tale of the Corregidor Cops had reached Manila itself.

Military experts who talk about the grilling drill of the Foreign Legion of France, the driving discipline of the Rurales under Porfirio Diaz in Mexico, could have visited Corregidor and learned something. Captain Reese, his face set like a Japanese war-mask, drove his men through a schedule that sounded like the decrees of a slave-driver gone mad. They had filled out again, from their Pacific voyage and its dietary horrors, with three square meals of rugged Army grub daily, and with clean drinking-water.

No longer were they the gaunt and lurching scarecrows who had disembarked from the *Sheridan*. Now their company commander hardened and toughened them anew.

Then, with supplies from Manila, out came a packing-case addressed to Captain Reese. He pried off the lid in his quarters, and sent for Peter Grayle.

"Two dozen pairs of boxing-gloves," he said. "All I could buy in Manila. Have them taken down to the orderly-room. Pass the word down the company. Every man in the outfit gets an hour of boxing every day. Private Mike Rafferty was a professional fighter. From what I understand, Private Harkford is good too. And tell 'em why. Time's coming when we'll be ordered back to our regiment. This stuff about the Corregidor Cops is going to be all over the islands from Mindanao to Luzon. Tell 'em if any man pulls that on any man in Company F, he has my full permission to paste him. If he doesn't, I'll disown him. If he does, I'll back him clear up to the President of the United States."

So Company F, some seventy men strong, was split up into boxing classes; and never in all its history had Corregidor Island so blossomed with black eyes and bleeding noses. They learned to take it, and they learned to dish it out. And over in Manila spread the tale of a company of men called now the "Texas Tarantulas," who, the story ran, were "so tough that when they can't pick a fight with somebody else, they sock themselves, just to see which way they fall."

And out of that welter of flying fists Private John Harkford, in his element, fought his way to the three chevrons of a sergeant. But though he looked yearningly at First Sergeant Peter Grayle, and the top-cutter, now Mike Rafferty's star pupil, looked yearningly back, their word to Captain Reese bound them, and they never crossed gloves.

Company F was trained to the razor edge that demands raw meat and growls over it, when at last their orders came, to rejoin their regiment at San Fabian.

"You look good to me, men," said Captain Reese, as they lined up to leave Corregidor. "Now let's see how you behave when we get where the Gugas are saying it with Mausers."

GENERAL LLOYD WHEATON at San Fabian was one of the old-time Regular Army officers who wore a beard. That square-cut mess of whiskers was far from

beautiful as it twitched in a most unmilitary grin, but the words that came through that hairy ambuscade sounded so much like celestial music to Captain Reese of Company F, that he could have planted a kiss squarely in the middle of that grizzled underbrush.

"YOUR colonel, Captain, has just been explaining to me the situation that has arisen since your company reached San Fabian," said General Wheaton. "I must confess that I like soldiers who will fight. But these—ah—Texas Tarantulas of yours are causing too many casualties within our own ranks. It practically amounts to—ah—internecine warfare."

"So I am forced to choose among alternatives. It would be most unfortunate to—ah—place the whole company under arrest for conduct prejudicial to discipline. So, since I have unconfirmed reports of a concentration of Filipino forces somewhere in the Province of Pangasinan, I am sending you with your whole company on an extensive reconnaissance. It can develop into dangerous work, Captain. You are to establish contact with the enemy, if possible, in the Lingayam-Aguilar area, and report their position back to these headquarters at once."

"Very well, sir. And may I thank the General?"

The words were wooden, and his face was wooden. But a light had leaped up behind Captain Reese's eyes as he saluted, executed a mechanically perfect officer's about-face, and headed for his outfit. His stride was dignified, as befitted a company commander. But if what was surging within him had broken the bounds of his self-control, he would have sprinted, emitting war-whoops.

Less than five minutes later in Company F a bugle sang. Orders crackled like rapid fire. Within the hour Company F, sixty-five strong, swung out of San Fabian. Behind them they left five of their men, too weak with dysentery to walk, but not too weak to curse their evil luck.

Blanket-roll slung from shoulder to opposite hip, haversack jammed with canned corned beef and hardtack, filled canteen slapping lean flank, rifle and cartridge-belt and bayonet, they were off to the wars, and their collective thumbs were at their collective noses to all the world.

Captain Reese halted them some quarter-mile beyond the town.



The Filipinos of this third outpost were trying to stem the tide. They stood firing steadily.

"I want a point of ten men to go about five hundred yards ahead of the column and draw the fire of any ambuscading Gugu we stumble into," he said. "Who volunteers?"

They yelped like a pack of terriers. It was unanimous.

"Good gang," approved Captain Reese. "First Sergeant Grayle, pick ten men and take command of them yourself."

"If the Captain please, may I have Sergeant Harkford as one of the ten, sir?"

"Oh! Hell, yes!"

The eyes of the two that had glared at each other across the green sod of Battery Knox at West Point so short a time before, met and held.

"Fall out, Sergeant," said Peter Grayle. "You're second in command of the point if anything happens to me."

His voice was quiet as he said it.

Then, name by name, First Sergeant Grayle called out the nine others. They swung ahead down the trail, while Captain Reese stood, watch in hand, timing them so they could get far enough ahead before he followed. . . .

The point was waiting in Lingayam when the rest of the company showed up.

"Not an armed Gugu in sight, sir," reported Peter Grayle. "Not a shot fired at us."

"Aguilar next," commanded Captain Reese. Again the point vanished up the trail, and presently the column followed.

It was late afternoon when Peter Grayle led his men into Aguilar. They were tired and hungry now, nerves taut

with the strain of endless peering into jungle growth, endless wondering when a Filipino rifle or volley would crash from behind those dense screens of tropic greenery. And there, roped to a tree, was a cow.

"Steaks on the hoof!" said Peter. "Save the iron rations."

One of his men stepped forward, rifle raised, to put a bullet between the cow's eyes.

"Hold on! Don't shoot!" commanded Peter. "Captain might hear the shot and think we're in a jam. Wait a minute."

Through the thin scattering of women and children who stood watching them he plowed, to a doorway where stood a wizened Filipino. Into the thatched hut he went, and emerged a few seconds later, a native knife in his hand. He slung his rifle over his shoulder; grasped the Filipino with his other hand; led him to the tethered animal.

"Murder that cow!" he ordered, straining the resources of his fragmentary Spanish.

"*Pero, Señor Capitan! Es mi vaca—*" began the wizened old Filipino's wail, to be cut short by Peter's sternly repeated order: "Murder that cow!"

THE cow was killed; and though the chunks of red meat, stuck on hastily cut sticks and seared over the coals of a swiftly kindled fire, were tough as chunks of India rubber, they tasted like a banquet to weary, hungry men. And there was plenty left when Captain Reese arrived with the rest of Company F.



Dusk was falling when all were fed. Captain Reese had sentries posted, while the rest of the men stretched out and relaxed. The first day gone, and not an armed Filipino sighted yet.

Over where the little group who had formed the point of the column all day lay stretched out, and smoking, came the company commander's orderly.

"Skipper wants to see the top-cutter," he said.

Then it was discovered that the first sergeant of Company F was missing.

Hut by hut, they started a quiet search for him. Half an hour had passed when he stepped out of the dark and stood before Captain Reese.

"Where the hell have you been?" demanded his skipper.

But Peter Grayle was too excited to observe military formalities just then.

"Captain," he said, "just about how far is a place that sounds like Mangatarem from here?"

"Less than ten miles, well as I remember. Why?"

"Captain, I think I've stumbled into something. I got to feeling like a soft-hearted sap about that old Filipino and his damned cow. After it was killed he kept saying: '*Madre de Dios, yo no tengo otra vaca!*' I had some money from the last poker game after last payday. I looked him up. Slipped him a ten-dollar goldpiece, and I thought he was going crazy. Called down the blessings of God on me and all that sort of thing. So—"

"Just what the hell have your private charities got to do with this reconnaissance, Grayle?"

Captain Reese was sore at a day without action, and didn't care who knew it.

"Plenty, sir," said First Sergeant Grayle, stiffening. "This old-timer, he kept calling me: '*Buen hombre!*' I thought I was kidding him, so I asked him if they weren't all good men around here. And he swore in Spanish, and said: '*No, señor. Muchos malos hombres en Mangatarem!*' Then when I tried out my talky-talky Spanish on him, he shut up like a clam and acted as if he didn't know anything whenever he heard me say Mangatarem. It sounds to me as if there were Gugus at Mangatarem, and they'd been raiding Aguilar the way they do for livestock and provisions generally."

"I don't know whether your reasoning is right or not," said Captain Reese, "but I'll tell you this: If I had any medals to hand out, you soft-hearted sap, I'd pin a couple on you this holy minute."

"Why, sir?" The sudden change in his company commander's tone left Peter more than slightly stunned.

"Confidentially, I'll let you into one of the secrets of high command," said Captain Reese with a grin. "It's one of the little points that makes some men national heroes and others break rocks in Fort Leavenworth. I'd sent for you to tell you that while my orders limit me to the Lingayam-Aguilar area, that word area is damned elastic. I was going to stretch it plumb to the other side of the Philippines to get this outfit a fight. Now I've got something to stretch it on. You probably have saved me from a court-martial when we get back, that's all."

Captain Reese rolled himself a Texas brown-paper cigarette, lit it, drew deeply, and nodded his head.

"*'Muchos malos hombres en Mangatarem'*, hunh," he said. "Well, we Corregidor Cops can get fat on bad men right now. And we're not going back to face those sons of bucks in San Fabian without an expended-ammunition report, if I have to march this outfit down to bleeding stumps at the ankles! These Kraggs were made to shoot with. Got your pocket-compass with you? Fine! Here—"

He unfolded his map. He tore a page out of his notebook. He made a rough sketch with compass-course indicated.

"Give your point another half-hour to rest. Then start out. I'll follow you

about a quarter of a mile behind. Don't lose yourself in the dark."

"Wait for you in Mangatarem, sir, if we find no Gugus?"

"Yes. But I've got a hunch our luck's beginning to run our way at last."

IT was black as the inside of that cow they had killed before they let light into it, Peter told himself, as he and his point of ten men slipped out of Aguilar in the dark. They were bunched close behind him, at his order, so a low-voiced command could be heard. Rifles at ready, they went silently down the trail, their heavy-shod feet making no sound at all on the damp earth.

Peter's nerves began to tauten as his imagination got to work. Who knew, he wondered, what barefooted and silent messenger might have padded ahead of them by trails unknown to them, to warn the Gugus, if armed Filipinos there were at Mangatarem, of their coming? Who knew what moment the darkness ahead might be rent and torn by the blaze of a volley of Mausers? What would happen to a man with a belly-wound, stretched there in the dark? What to a man with a broken leg, lost by his companions in the mêlée of night fighting?

He growled at himself and tried to concentrate his mind on following the trail by the dim light of the stars. But memories kept creeping back of the tales he had heard in Manila and San Fabian: Tales of wounded men staked out by a tropical anthill by savage jungle tribesmen. Tales of men buried alive up to their necks, and a trail of sugar from their faces to an anthill nearby. Tales of tortures even more horrible than that, familiar to every American soldier in the Philippines. And mingled with them, those tales he had heard in his boyhood from old Cap'n Ander and his comrades-in-arms, of the strange ways some men behaved the first time they came under fire. What would he do when the shooting started, if ever the shooting started? Black night and a jungle trail are poor places for thoughts like these.

It seemed to him that endless hours had passed. From time to time, under a blanket unrolled and held tent-wise over him as he halted the little force, he struck a match and studied his rough map and his pocket-compass.

Then, as they came silently to a space where the jungle fell away on either side, far down the trail he saw a flickering pinpoint of light against the blackness.

His whispered command, his wide-spread arms and rifle, brought his little group to a sudden halt.

"Not a ghost of a sound, now," he whispered hoarsely. "Single file. One hand on the man in front of you. Follow me."

Silently they inched through the dark until the fire was some two hundred yards ahead. A low growth of tropical bushes provided cover here. Straining his eyes, Peter sought to make out human forms around that fire. But no flames were leaping up. It was a faintly flickering bed of coals, apparently. He could make out nothing clearly in what light it gave.

"Harkford!" he murmured.

"Here," said the man behind him.

"Take cover for the outfit in these bushes, and take command until I get back," he whispered in Sergeant Harkford's ear. "I'm crawling up this ditch alongside the trail to get closer and see if I can make out just who's around that fire. Here—" Swiftly and silently he divested himself of blanket-roll, haversack, canteen, cartridge-belt and scabbard bayonet, and handed them over in the darkness with his rifle. "Have one of the men hold these for me. Can't crawl half as fast with all this junk. If shooting starts up there and I don't come back, pile into the Gugus with all you've got, but send one man back on the run to tell Captain Reese we've flushed 'em."

Then he was gone. A hot glow had started coursing through him now. It survived even the chill of the shallow, stagnant pools of water; the clammy, sticky, foul-smelling mud into which he had lowered himself and started to crawl silently toward that one spot of light in the blackness.

Inch by inch, with the utmost care, he made it. Silently as the Indians his own ancestors had fought,—and survived because they were better at the game than the Indians themselves,—he came within some fifty feet of the fire, and peered through the tangle of vegetation that lined the ditch.

HIS heart leaped. Against the glow of the dying embers he could discern three silhouettes of men sitting on the ground, rifles across their knees. Near them half a dozen mounds or more indicated others stretched on the ground sleeping. No possible question about it. This was an outpost of armed Filipinos. And an outpost meant that the main



Instinctively Peter reversed his Krag, and crowded closer, smashing, smashing.

body was somewhere farther on, toward Mangatarem.

Inch by inch he backed down the ditch up which he had crawled until he felt it safe to turn around. Then, twisting himself silently until he faced toward his men, he crawled back the way he had come. Presently, drenched to the skin, coated and masked with foul mud and slime, he was with his men again.

"Henderson and Birdsall," he whispered to the two nearest, "don't make a sound, but you two head back down the trail and hit the outfit. Tell Captain Reese we're waiting on the trail about two hundred yards from a Gugu outpost. About eight or ten men, I think, with rifles. Tell him to watch for the light of their fire as he comes up the trail. If you don't hear any shooting, we'll be right here waiting for him."

The two privates vanished silently in the dark. Peter buckled on his cartridge belt, slung his canteen and haversack and blanket-roll over his shoulders and grasped his rifle once more. The feel of the oily wood and smooth steel was gratifying.

More hours seemed to pass in the blackness before Captain Reese stood be-

side him. The deeper blackness that comes before the first graying of the dawn intensified in the sky.

"Took longer than I thought to reach you," whispered the company commander. "You'd got about a mile ahead of us. They're up there by the fire?"

"Yes, Captain. Armed outpost. Eight to ten men, as well as I could make out. Rifles. I crawled up that ditch and got within about fifty feet of them."

"Are you sure they're there yet? Sure they're Gugs?"

"Pretty sure, Captain."

PETER couldn't know the thoughts that passed through Captain Reese's mind. If those were Filipinos, fine; the party would start as soon as he brought up his company from the point some quarter of a mile back, where he had halted it to come silently up to the vanguard alone. But suppose they weren't Filipinos? Suppose they might be another American reconnaissance party? General Wheaton had ordered him to make his reconnaissance in the Lingayam-Aguilar area. No mention of Mangatarem. Suppose the General had sent out another outfit by another route toward Mangatarem? Company F had had its bellyful of kidding on this Corregidor Cops business. Company F



couldn't afford to take a chance and make a bust like firing into Americans in the dark.

"I wish you'd make absolutely sure they're there yet, and that they're Gugus, Grayle," said Captain Reese.

Sudden anger flamed in Peter Grayle's breast.

"Very well, sir," he said. But to himself: "I'll be damned if I'll crawl up that ditch again on any damfool errand like this."

Rifle at the ready, he strode straight up the trail toward the dying fire. He didn't even crouch, didn't seek any advantage of any cover at all. But his footfalls on the wet earth were soundless. That was why he got within twenty feet of the glowing bed of embers without a sound from the group he now could see plainly in their light, some yet sleeping on the ground; some yet huddled, arms about knees, rifles in sharp silhouette.

But then the sleepy scene erupted like a volcano.

"*Quien viva!*" The sharp Spanish challenge rang through the night as seated figures that had been drowsily hugging their knees in the stillness leaped to their feet.

Then on the heels of the challenge, shrill cries sounded.

"*Los Americanos! Los Americanos!*"

And another voice, evidently that of a Filipino lieutenant,—for Peter could see

that he was belted with an oversize saber, and was tugging at a holster-flap to get out his pistol,—cried:

"*Fuego! Fuego!*"

Blasts of flame blazed in the darkness as the Mausers cracked. A hot iron raked Peter Grayle's ribs. Another streaked along his cheek.

He raised his Krag and squeezed trigger. Two of the figures nearest him slumped and sprawled. The others fled, vanished into the blackness.

"Come on, gang!" yelled Peter over his shoulder. And as another thought struck him: "Don't shoot! Hold your fire till you get here!" For it had dawned upon him that, silhouetted against the fire, he might get American bullets in the back if his ten men came charging up shooting as they ran.

THEN in that space of seconds, while he stood alone by that deserted fire, fierce exultation flamed within him. He, Peter Grayle, had stood his baptism of fire and he hadn't flinched. He hadn't even thought of turning tail or seeking cover.

He had stood there coolly and shot it out with his country's enemies, blazing away at him with rifles in their hands. He had forgotten himself so far, even, as to give orders to men among whom his own captain stood! Now he knew the answer to the profession of arms. You got scared, but you went on, if you were a soldier.

The thud of running feet surged up to him from the trail down which he had marched alone in the dark.

"They're Gugus, and they were there, Captain Reese!" he shouted. "They went that way!"

But it was Sergeant John Harkford's voice that answered him.

"Captain Reese sprinted back to get the company. He hadn't even brought his orderly with him."

Then like a flash it dawned upon First Sergeant Peter Grayle that he was the ranking duty non-com of Company F, in command on the firing-line of a battle, with no orders to hamper him.

"Spread out, gang!" His voice rose like a battle-cry. "Line of skirmishers! Fire at will! Forward!"

Yelps like a wolf-pack on the hunt answered him. Through the undergrowth into which the Filipinos had vanished like scuttling rabbits, they charged, and through a bamboo thicket. Then into an open rice paddy.

The grayness of coming dawn was in the air. The Filipinos had had only a matter of seconds to run. There they were, clutching their rifles, racing for cover on the other side.

"Get those rabbits!" yelled Peter Grayle. He halted. His Krag sent out its whiplash crack. A Filipino pitched down. Others turned and fired back at the Americans in the dim half-light, then sprinted in flight.

Across the rice paddy now. Through the thin fringe of growth on the other side. Another opening. Here, standing tense and poised with their rifles ready to shoot, was another group of Filipinos.

"Smash 'em, gang!" Peter Grayle's voice rose hoarse and high. "Don't give 'em a chance to get set!"

Raucous shout of American infantrymen mingled with the shrill calls of the Filipinos. Shots blazed in the grayness. This second outpost of Filipinos was making a stand. Inspiration flamed in First Sergeant Grayle. He summoned his scanty Spanish.

"*Adelante, batallon!*" he roared. ("Forward, battalion!")

The ruse worked. In the dimness, all the Filipinos could see was a vague line of charging, shooting, yelling Americans. But not even Aguinaldo himself, they knew, would stand against an American battalion with only a couple of outposts to back him. They emptied their rifles wildly, then joined the flight.

Close on their heels, shooting and shouting, raced the point of ten men under Peter Grayle. Not one was down.

SOMEWHERE in the middle of that line, First Sergeant Grayle discovered he was having the time of his life. The fatigues of a day and a night of taut, tense reconnaissance were forgotten. Strength flowed through his hundred and ninety pounds of bone and rawhide. He brandished his heavy Krag as if it were a light walking-stick. In Spanish and English he shouted commands to imaginary captains of that imaginary battalion.

Then as the grayness of the break of dawn lightened, he saw that his force was increased. Up to join that spearhead of ten men and a first sergeant, the fleet-footed of Company F had come racing. By the time they flushed the third Filipino outpost, Peter's line of skirmishers had increased to eighteen or twenty men.

"Smash 'em!" he yelled again, as he burst into the clearing where they stood.



"Don't give 'em a chance to get set! Hit 'em hard! Fix bayonets! Charge!"

For the Filipinos of this third outpost were trying for a moment to stem the tide. They stood firing steadily. But into them charged Peter Grayle like a half-back carrying the ball, with his whole team running interference; and out of the jungle growth across the opening the Filipinos could see more American doughboys in their blue flannel shirts and slouch hats come bursting, firing and shouting as they came. It was too much. They too turned and fled, joining the remnants of the fleeing first two outposts, leaving their dead and wounded behind them.

Battle-madness had descended upon Company F now. The Corregidor Cops had found themselves a fight at last. Hot after the fleeing enemy they raced.

American blanket-rolls, haversacks, even canteens, strewed the trail behind them as the men of Company F to increase their speed shucked off everything but rifles, bayonets and cartridge-belts. All they wanted was to get at close quarters with a Gugu. They'd give those sons of bucks back at San Fabian something to chew on!

And out in front of them, leaping like a whirling dervish, shouting his insane mixture of Spanish and English commands to that battalion that never was, First Sergeant Peter Grayle had gone completely wild with battle-lust. He was singing, now, at the top of his voice. They all knew the song. Hoarse voices that should have saved their breath for better leg-work, joined him:

Ah'm lookin' fo' yo' bully,
Who jes' done come to town!
Ah brung along mah trusty blade
T' cyarve dat bully down!

Rifle-shots punctuated the music.



"Come on, you sons of sin!" roared Peter Grayle, reloading his Krag on the run. "Come on! Hit 'em!"

"Come on, hell—you damned lunatic! We're right here right now!" That was Sergeant John Harkford, not ten yards from him, racing alongside him.

They were charging straight into the combined armies of General Alejandrino and General San Miguel, some two thousand strong, the biggest armed force the Filipinos had; and they didn't know it.

It wouldn't have made any difference to a man of Company F if they had known it, that minute. High on the crest of that surge of battle-madness, they would have charged into the muzzles of the combined armies of the royal and imperial Europe of their time. American volunteers get that way now and then. American regulars, too.

BY now Captain Reese and his two lieutenants had caught up with them. It made no change in the tactics of one of the strangest running battles in American military history. This was the dish for which Captain Reese had been yearning. Somewhere along the trail up which he had raced, he had discarded the sword that impeded his speed. His heavy single-action .45, for which most of the officers in the Philippines had discarded the regulation Army .38, was in his right hand. His yells took up the refrain of the music Peter Grayle had started.

Company F was singing again:

"When you hear those bells go ting-ling-ling!

*All join hands and sweetly we will sing
Da-da-da-da—in the chorus all join in:
There'll be a hot time in the old town
tonight!"*

Onward they swept, sixty-five crazy Americans, shouting, singing, shooting—

and suddenly there was the town of Mangataram looming ahead of them, and into its streets fleeing, never more than a hundred yards ahead of their advance, was the remnant of the outposts they had flushed.

Company F never halted an instant. Into the muddy lanes that were Mangataram's streets they came roaring. The burst of fire that greeted them might as well have been the buzzing of flies.

If any command sounded, nobody heard it. This was help-yourself fighting.

Bullet, bayonet, butt, boot and fist—anything went. Through that swirl of street-fighting at its damndest, Company F tore like a fist through wet paper. They were out to make "Corregidor Cops" a fighting-man's badge of honor.

Little brown men with Mausers, firing in open street and plaza, firing from thatched houses, firing from behind corners, as fast as they could work trigger, stood it for some fifteen minutes. But little brown men with Mausers were not built to stand long before red-eyed, unshaven, mud-smeared maniacs with Krags who came running at them whimpering with the eagerness of a drunkard for his liquor, who fought as close as they could get to their foes, yelping like savage animals to get closer; who stormed through the streets shooting, thrusting with red-stained bayonets, swinging rifle-butts like axes, and singing—*Madre de Dios!*—even singing!

Out of a side-street where a swirl of such fighting had swept him, First Sergeant Peter Grayle came roaring into the plaza, and squarely into a group of a dozen Filipino riflemen. There was no time to shoot, before they were all about him. Instinctively he reversed his Krag, smashed the steel-shod butt into the jaw of a contorted brown face before him, and crowded closer, smashing, smashing,

smashing. There wasn't even room to swing the weapon. Hot pain stabbed his shoulder as behind him a knife went darting in like a striking snake, to glance on his shoulder-blade. Then there was a hoarse roar close to him. Out of the corner of an eye, he caught a glimpse of a gun-butt swinging, as he smashed again with a straight butt-thrust. Then the bellow of an old single-action .45 blasted in his ears. And suddenly he was out in the clear.

Tensely gripping the barrel of his Krag, butt poised to smash again, he looked for a target. A huddle of bodies was sprawled at his feet. Five Filipinos were racing across the plaza. Beside him stood Sergeant Harkford and Captain Reese, the company commander reloading his six-shooter as fast as he could shove in the shells.

"Thanks," said Peter Grayle.

"Forget it," said John Harkford.

But even as he spoke, Peter snapped his rifle to his shoulder and fired. A Filipino fell forward on the windowsill of a house facing the plaza, his Mauser dropping outside.

"Thanks all around," said Captain Reese. "He might have got one of us, anyway."

Then, with a sudden staccato of a dozen ragged shots, a strange silence fell upon Mangatarem.

"It looks," said Captain Reese, "as if we'd taken ourselves a town."

Miraculously, they had. Out of Mangatarem, racing toward the mountains behind it, the armies of General Alejandrino and General San Miguel streamed in full flight.

"Fall in the company here in the plaza," said Captain Reese to his first sergeant. "Strikes me it's damned near time for breakfast."

Incredibly, they had not lost a man. There were wounds, of course; some slight, some more serious. But nothing their own first-aid kits couldn't patch. And from the frightened Presidente of Mangatarem, they learned the incredible extent of their victory.

THOSE sixty-five mad Americans had routed a combined army nearly two thousand strong, they learned; the biggest single armed force in the whole organization of the Philippine insurrection. And a swift check by inspecting squads confirmed the rest of the Presidente's story. They had taken Aguineldo's biggest base of supplies. Native

warehouses in Mangatarem were packed ceiling high with sacked rice, stacks of dried fish and dried meat, piled cases of ammunition, and a sizable stand of arms. They had recaptured fifteen American prisoners of the Filipinos and twenty-four Spanish prisoners, seven of whom were officers. And swiftly Captain Reese armed these thirty-nine men from the captured weapons and ammunition.

"This outfit is good, but don't let us kid ourselves we're too damned good," he told his two lieutenants as they sat in a quick council of war after breakfast. "Those Gugus couldn't believe any sixty-five men in the world were crazy enough to tackle two thousand. They had it figured out we were the advance guard of a big expedition. They expected to see the whole American army come busting out of the *bosque* any minute. So when they caught the panic from those outposts we drove into Mangatarem, they figured the time to get out was right now, before more of them were dead.

"Now we've got a town of three thousand population, and we're in one hell of a hot spot. If those Gugus in the hills ever get back their nerve and counter-attack, the lid's off hell that minute.

"Post sentries. Give 'em orders to shoot at anybody they see trying to leave town. I don't want any Gugu slipping out into the hills to tell 'em how few we really are. Bring me that Presidente. I'll have him issue a proclamation to his people to stay in their own streets until further orders.

"Pick the four best men we've got in Company F—tough, unwounded privates. Send 'em to me. I'm writing a dispatch for General Wheaton telling him what the Corregidor Cops have got, and howling for reinforcements. And if you're good at prayer, you pray they come damned soon. Nobody in this outfit is going to get much sleep until they do."

Presently the four couriers, with filled cartridge-belts and canteens, and a square meal lining their bellies, slipped off into the *bosque* and headed for San Fabian. And Company F, red-eyed, mud-smeared, bristling-bearded, almost asleep on its collective feet, settled down to patrolling the town it had captured, thanking God for some sacks of coffee in one of the warehouses. That, gulped black and bitter, at least helped keep them awake.

Three days and nights of undiluted hell their vigil lasted. Then bugles sang up the trail, and into Mangatarem, at the head of a panting battalion of Ameri-



The Corregidor Cops had found themselves a fight at last.

can infantry, rode Colonel J. Franklin Bell, mounted on a "*caballo grande*"—a big American horse. "Ding-dong" Bell, the doughboys called him, he hit so hard. He was clad in riding-breeches and boots, topped by a sleeveless undershirt torn open at the front, and a battered slouch hat. But to the scarecrows of Company F he looked like the Angel Gabriel newcome with a passport to Paradise.

PARADED company front in the plaza, Company F received him with full military honors. His keen eyes inspected them.

"My congratulations on an outfit of fighting-men that look it and have proved it!" he said to Captain Reese in front of them all. And the collective soul of Company F purred like a cat full of cream.

"One hour's rest for my battalion, Captain," Colonel Bell informed Captain Reese, "and I'm going after that Filipino force you drove into the mountains. Our intelligence has reported they've got a fort of some sort up there. Your company can guard Mangatarem and take a rest. Your men need it, and God knows they've earned it."

"If the Colonel please," said the commander of Company F, "I hope that is not a direct order."

"Why?" Colonel Bell's eyes narrowed.

"Rest hell, sir!" exploded the taut nerves of the company commander. "We started this show. We want to be in at the finish. If we've earned anything, we've earned that much."

"Well—" A slow grin took possession of the face of the fighting colonel who knew his fighting-men. "If you feel that way about it—all right."

And the hoarse yelp that rose from the ranks of Company F as the news

passed down the line told Ding-Dong Bell all he needed to know about why Mangatarem had fallen. . . .

They were back in Mangatarem before the week was out. With them they were dragging fifteen pieces of captured artillery. Behind them they left a heap of ruins that had been a Filipino mountain stronghold, and scattered bands of Filipinos fleeing through the hills.

Most of the feet in Company F were wrapped in strips cut from blankets. They had marched themselves clean through their shoes. Under their bristling beards their faces were gaunt and hollowed. Their red-rimmed eyes looked out of sunken caverns. Their flannel shirts and their khaki pants were in rags.

But their heads were high, and among them a new song had been born—a song that fitted to the swing of their tramping feet. They sang it, full-throated, as they marched into Mangatarem again:

We start any battle they let us.

You'll find us there yet when it stops.

Lef'—lef'—

Here—comes—Company F—

Lookin' for trouble? We dish it out double!

WE'RE THE CORREGIDOR COPS!

Captain Reese surveyed them as they came to a halt once more in the plaza they had taken from two thousand men. He was as dirty, as gaunt, as unshaven, as ragged as the worst of them. His eyes peered as redly from the bottoms of caverns as deep as theirs. But the light in those eyes softened fondly as he looked at them.

They had come into his hands a disorganized rabble of tough individualists. They were tougher than ever now; each man with his individuality more marked than before. But they had been forged into a blade tempered in the white heat of battle, a blade of beautiful balance

that swung and thrust to his will, that fitted the grip of his hand.

"Now, you Texas Tarantulas!" he said, and his voice was husky, hoarse with fatigue and feeling. "We'll let some of these Johnny-come-latelies patrol the beat. Go sleep your heads off. You've earned it. Get tight as a tick if you want to, and find you can promote the liquor. Company F reports right here for duty at noon, three days from now. Dismiss!"

They broke ranks with a yell. Some of them, men told long after in Manila, slept two days and two nights!

IT was midafternoon of that day, three days later, when First Sergeant Peter Grayle and Sergeant John Harkford relaxed from their rigid stand of attention, as Captain Reese said: "Sit down. This is going to be damned unmilitary, anyway. That's why I sent for you."

He looked at them as they sat there. They were scrubbed and shaven. Long hours of sleep had filled out the gauntness in their faces, faded the red rims about their eyes. They wore their rags jauntily.

"I want to read you two something," he said. "I've just finished my report on the capture of Mangatarem. It's supposed to go down to General Wheaton by courier tomorrow."

From the sheets of closely written paper, he read paragraph after paragraph, slowly. And red began to suffuse the two tanned young faces before him. Young men are few who have earned such words, and can without embarrassment hear them read before others. These were words many a professional soldier spends a lifetime in uniform without seeing as part of his military record:

"Daring initiative—instantaneous and accurate judgment and decision on the spur of the moment under fire—fine qualities of leadership—unflinching courage in the face of heavy enemy fire—complete disregard of odds estimated at thirty to one—effectiveness in hand-to-hand combat that was an inspiration to their men—best traditions of the United States Army volunteers—"

Captain Reese looked into the eyes of the two young men before him.

"Grayle," he said, "is there any word in this report about Sergeant Harkford that you would dispute or deny?"

"No sir."

"Harkford, anything about First Sergeant Grayle that you know isn't true?"

"No sir."

Each was looking at the wall straight ahead of him. But their eyes swung back to meet their company commander's face as his voice burst explosively.

"Then listen to me, you two: I made you a promise back in San Antonio. I heard you two make a damfool bet about a year's pay. I want you both to release me from that promise and call that bet off. This isn't an order. It's a request among gentlemen. I'm asking you two a personal favor for my own sake. I'd look like a fine north end of a south-bound jackass, wouldn't I, after I filed a report like this about you two, and then told you to go ahead and try to knock each other's heads off like a pair of bar-room bums—in front of men you've led in battle, men who respect you today!"

He let that sink in. Then his voice rose once more.

"There isn't a thing about you two before you came into this outfit I don't know. I made it my business to learn. I'd be a hell of a company commander if I didn't! Your own mothers never knew as much about you as I do since you've been in Company F. Both of you did your share helping me whip this outfit into shape. You helped me make a record any captain in the Regular Army would be proud to be able to claim for his company."

He stopped and rolled a brown-paper cigarette, lit it and dragged deep.

"Each of you was hell-bent on showing the other up, and wrecking him, for something that happened before either of you were born. You've heard in my report how you look to me. You know damned well by now, the only thing you can show up to wreck a soldier is to show him up yellow or a liar and a crook. You two couldn't find a yellow streak in each other if I gave you a microscope. You've never lied to me. I don't believe you've got a crooked hair in your two bodies. You've proved to me you're soldiers and men."

"Now, damn you, are you men enough to stand up here in front of me and shake hands and mean it?"

Their faces were red as schoolboys', as they looked at him, and then looked at each other.

It was Harkford who spoke first.

"Before there's any handshaking, Grayle, I want you to know something. I *did* have eighteen pounds on you, and a couple years of hard boxing experience, that morning in Battery Knox. But by

God, you kept coming, and I've been feeling like a louse about it for a long time."

"Forget it," said Peter Grayle, just as John Harkford had said, "Forget it," that morning of the *mêlée* in the plaza of Mangatarem.

They rose. Two hard young hands shot out and met; gripped in the clasp of grown men.

"This," said Captain Reese, "calls for a drink, I think."

Into a blanket-roll amid a pile of equipment beside the rough table that served as his desk, he reached, and pulled out a bottle.

"Twenty-year-old Kentucky Bourbon," he said. "Colonel Bell's personal stock. It'll never have a finer occasion."

Then, as three issue mess-cups were filled and emptied, he looked at them both and grinned broadly.

"It may be a little premature, for I haven't put it up to you two yet," he chuckled. "But this amounts to the ancient ceremonial of wetting a pair of commissions."

"What?" That came, involuntarily, from both of them.

"Mail came up while you two were sleeping," he said. "I've still got friends in Washington. Congress has just voted the authorization and the funds to enlarge the United States Marine Corps. There'll be a flock of new commissions. No question about you two being able to pass the physical and mental examinations. I've talked to Colonel Bell about it, and no question about you two getting a pair of second lieutenancies on his recommendation to a certain gentleman in Washington. If you want 'em, he'll send a cable to Manila tomorrow."

"Good Lord, sir, yes!" said Peter Grayle. "And thanks!"

"That goes for me too, sir," said John Harkford.

"Then you two get the hell out of here and get ready to leave for Manila tomorrow," said Captain Reese. "And if a hundred dollars will help you celebrate on your way to Washington, you can take your time on paying it back."

A MOMENT later, his hand tingling from two viselike grips, he watched them go across the plaza of Mangatarem, side by side, their swinging steps in unison.

"Feud's end," chuckled the commander of Company F. "Wonder if the United States Marines will ever say thanks for

the present the United States Army just made 'em."

Two prospective second lieutenants of Marines weren't thinking in terms like that, however. Their shoulders free of a load of hereditary hate for the first time in their lives, each free at last to admit what a hell of a grand guy the other was, they were planning the celebrations they would stage in Manila. Yokohama, Honolulu, San Francisco and points east, on their way to Washington. The ports of the world and the Seven Seas thereof were unrolling before their eyes. Long years of service. Permanency in the Corps that was older than Army and Navy both.

"We're in the Navy now!" hummed Peter Grayle.

"My God!" said John Harkford. "It just dawned on me: We'll have half the old gang at West Point to fight every time the argument starts about the Army-Navy game. Say, there'll be boxing-gloves at Manila. I want to show you a block for a straight left."

"My eye!" said Peter Grayle. "Mike Rafferty has taught me nothing else for months. Now I've got a double feint and a left hook to the jaw—"

And then they looked at each other and burst out laughing. Still laughing, they strode down the muddy street of Mangatarem.



The Devil Is Dead



Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley

CAP'N LUCAS winked at the seamen around him, then gazed gravely at young Jack Bertram, whose brown cheeks bore a trace of Indian blood.

"How to lay the devil for keeps and be sure he's dead? Ah, lad, that's a hard business. First, ye must catch him!"

"Aye, sir," said Bertram, while the crew nudged and grinned.

"Then slash off his head, quick!" went on the skipper. "But how to be sure he's dead? There's the hard thing. The devil always comes alive again. Only one way to make sure of him: Wait till his eyes glaze, then pop a sailcloth needle into each eye—quick! When it's done, so's the job. Many a time—"

"Cap'n Lucas!" came the lookout's wild, startled yell. "Sail ho! A schooner be bearing down on we, wi' the black flag aloft!"

The men forgot their joke; Cap'n Lucas forgot his yarn.

"All hands, all hands!" bawled his voice. "Look alive! It's the pirate Teach, I know his rig—"

Desperately the *Laughing Girl* scudded close-hauled. Desperately the dour New England men wet down the sloop's canvas. Desperately they eyed the schooner closing up the gap between, until her first gun barked. Then her second gun, and the sloop's mast cracked, toppled.

The sloop slewed to the drag and wallowed upon the Atlantic swells. Bertram, at the useless tiller, gawked and swallowed hard, a flush in his brown



And the little sloop Mary Jane came into port with his head spiked to the bowsprit!

By
GORDON KEYNE

thin cheeks, and never dreamed that kindly Cap'n Lucas had been joking about the devil. To Bertram, as to many another in this autumn of 1718, the devil was a serious proposition.

The schooner bore down with final rush, her deck alive with men, a blood-red shirt at the foretop, a black flag at the main, and clinging in the shrouds a tremendous big form, garish of garb and black of shaggy beard.

"Blackbeard—the devil in person," said Cap'n Lucas. "God help us all now!"

With a chorus of triumphant yells the schooner brought to, dropped her longboat, and it came dancing over the waves. Bertram still stood staring, a chill in his heart. The boat was alongside. Over the rail came a throng of wild rascals, led by a thin fellow whose sharp fair face was marred by a broken nose.

"Where's the captain?" he shouted as he ran aft, waving a long pistol.

"I'm Cap'n Lucas." The skipper stood firm. "What d'ye want of me?"

The fellow halted, bowed mockingly.

"What does Cap'n Teach want of anyone? I'm his first officer. What's your lading?"

"Naught but rum for New England. Look for yourself. Nothing of value."

"A prize for thirsty men!" Flatnose laughed. "Into the boat, all of you."

One by one, hands bound behind them, they went down into the boat: six men, Tom Reed the mate, and Cap'n Lucas. To Bertram, it was unreal. They had done nothing. They could not be punished. Yet the words around him—*Teach, Blackbeard*, the devil incarnate! And when he set foot aboard the schooner, he saw the reason. The huge figure of the shrouds, Captain Edward Teach—credible and awesome, close at hand.

He was in a tipsy slaving passion, his black eyes rolling. His huge black beard was in plaits, weighted with bullets to keep it clear of his eyes—plaits twisted behind his ears, smoking slow-matches tied to them, others in his cocked hat. Blackbeard, who played the devil. The flat-nosed mate saluted him mockingly.

"These gentlemen, and their cargo of rum, ask your favor, worthy master—"

"I ask no favors from a bloody pirate," said Cap'n Lucas proudly.

Blackbeard glared at him.

"Ho! You'll take a walk in my park. Lively about it, lads! A short walk to all. A short walk and a short memory!"

"I wish you no worse than a long memory," said Cap'n Lucas, "when the trap opens under your feet."

Teach exploded oaths and swung a pistol, but Cap'n Lucas stood grimly.

"When you see the devil below," cried Blackbeard, "you can tell him of a



Blackbeard
Teach

greater devil above, who fears neither God nor man, rope, lead nor steel!"

So saying, he turned and lurched for his cabin.

Flatnose came up to Cap'n Lucas.

"You see how it is. We've no plank at hand, but step to the rail, and we'll do the rest. Officers first, my hearties!"

His brown hair blowing in the breeze, his tanned face grim, Lucas obeyed. Tom Reed mounted to the rail beside him; and men clustered around, binding their ankles. Bertram, in the clustered knot of prisoners, sickened with a clammy sweat. But his eyes did not flinch, for there was Indian blood in him, shrewd blood, ugly blood.

"Excuse me!" And with a laugh, with a push in the small of the back, Flatnose sent Cap'n Lucas over. Tom Reed followed, amid a burst of yells and laughter from the crowding men. Boats were already plying to and from the sloop.

"Now, lads!" Rubbing his hands, Flatnose came to the knot of staring, cursing New Englanders. "Who chooses for a voyage under our Cap'n Teach? Gold, women, rum aplenty and a free life!"

"Be damned to you!" cried William Brown of Charles Town. "Bloody murderers! We're not of your stripe!"

So said one and another; but Bertram spoke out boldly.

"I'll join, and glad of it!"

Growls and curses, wild furious reproaches, dinned upon him—and roaring

laughter and wild acclaim. The others were pressed to the rail. One by one they were bound and shoved over. William Brown was the last of all.

Flatnose breasted the rail to watch, laughing softly. William Brown slipped his wrist-bonds. He leaped, he clutched Flatnose by the middle; and with a heave and a yell, they went over. Twined together, they struck the water, and together they sank, and did not break up through the eddies.

Thus Bertram joined the devil's crew, his dark cheeks and sultry eyes betokening Indian blood—the blood that forgets not nor forgives.

SOME two months later, in the opening part of November, Bertram sat at his meal in the Princess Anne tavern, in Williamsburg. The taproom was deserted except for a shock-headed boy brightening the brass and copper. Bertram wore haphazard garments, shrunk and stained by water; a half-healed scar streaked his right cheek with sinister touch; but he had money, and stoked his furnace with stolid precision. The tap-boy stared at him, and stared again.

And suddenly Bertram knew the boy: one of a crew with whom Teach had lately dealt; a Chesapeake trading-sloop, craft scuttled and crew marooned on a lonely strip of the Carolina coast. As recognition came to each, the boy let out a bleat that rose to a scream.

"I know you—one of Blackbeard's men—a *pirate*! Help! Help! Here's a pirate—come and get him, quick! A *pirate*!"

Bertram leaped up, cold with dismay, furious at this trick of fortune.

"Silence, you fool! Curse you, let me out of here—"

The boy shrank back, but barred the way stubbornly.

"You're a pirate spying for news! Help, here! Help! A *pirate*!"

Bertram's brain raced. A bolt into the street—then where? Williamsburg was the capital of Virginia province. Flight meant guilt.

Here was the landlord, horse-pistol in his fist; the black hostlers, gaping stable-boys crowding the threshold, pitchforks at the ready. The street doorway filled with citizen figures—a trickle, an inpour, borne upon the clatter of running feet; alarm hails, exultant voices, excited shouts. The room was crowded with a jumble of gawking, angry faces, flourished fists, hemming in the man who

was at bay in the corner, lashed by waves of fury, unable to make himself heard.

"That's one of 'em!" the boy was shrilling away. "I remember him. Take him!"

"Seize him; out with him; hang him! Where's a rope?" lifted the voices. "Out with the gallows-bird!"

The landlord was to the front, horse-pistol thrust forward, fat chest heaving.

"You can't escape, you bloody scoundrel! Yield!"

"I'm not escaping, you fool," said Bertram into a lull. "I'm no pirate—"

"He is! He lies!" shrilled the boy. "He was on Blackbeard's ship! He helped row the boat that put me and the others ashore!"

Turmoil dinned again, there was a rush forward. Bertram seized a stool and whirled it. The half-circle recoiled hurriedly from fear of a Blackbeard pirate; but the clamor swelled again in yapping frenzy. Men yelled at one another to shove at him.

Then, suddenly, the circle parted. A newcomer masterfully shouldered through and came into the front rank, with glimmer of blue uniform coat and fine linen. An officer of the Royal Navy, Bertram saw instantly.

A young officer, sandy hair and hazel eyes, a slim boyish back, a quick gaze sweeping the scene and then turning. Hand on sword-hilt, he faced the mob.

"What's all this? Fifty of you against one man?"

"A pirate from Blackbeard's crew!" went up the yell. "Out with him! Hang him!"

"A pirate? Here in Williamsburg?" exclaimed the young officer incredulously.

"Aye, Your Honor," cried the landlord. "My tap-boy recognizes the rascal as one o' Blackbeard's crew. The boy was on a ship took by 'em last month!"

The officer turned, his eyes seeing Bertram more clearly, probing him.

"You, sirrah? A pirate?"

"I'm not," snapped Bertram. "Give me a chance to explain in private."

"Egad! Hanged if you look like a villain, despite that scar; but hang you if you are one. From Teach's crew?"

"He is, he is!" shrilled the boy. "Helped maroon us, he did!"

"I did not," rapped out Bertram. "I got this scar on my cheek for refusing to have a hand in those damnable doings."

"So you admit it, eh?" said the officer shrewdly. "You're one of Blackbeard's

men, eh? What are you doing in Williamsburg?"

"He's a spy!" blurted the landlord.

"String him up, says I!"

"Then no one will know what I'm here for," said Bertram. "Let this officer take me to the Governor, and it'll be a different story."

The officer surveyed him with sharply narrowed gaze, but Bertram met the look boldly, with sultry defiance.

"Clear the room, landlord," snapped the officer abruptly. "Out, everybody! I'll have a word in private with this fellow, whether pirate or not. God save the King! Out!"

Muttering, wrathful, the crowd went stamping out until only the landlord remained. The young officer took a chair and delivered cool command:

"Put that stool on its legs, man, and sit down. Prove your scar to be an honest one, and you'll come to no harm. Egad! Quite the contrary, in fact. I'm Lieutenant Robert Maynard, of His Majesty's frigate *Pearl*. Who are you?"

"Jack Bertram, of Albany; I was one aboard the *Laughing Girl* out o' Boston, when Teach took her."

"Likely enough," sniffed the landlord.

"Blackbeard recruits hands from—"

"Hold your tongue," Maynard snapped.

"You, Bertram! You look young for a pirate."

"Nineteen, four year at sea, and no pirate, damn you!" flared out Bertram.

"Ha! Hard eye and hard tongue, eh? And damn you back again." Maynard laughed. "I'm nineteen myself. But I wear the King's coat, and you're in rags with a scar for your rank. I think the pirate business doesn't pay. Eh?"

BERTRAM flared again, finding himself baited by this jackanapes in livery.

"I'm no pirate, I tell you! Take off your blue King's coat, and I'll break you in two for the word."

"Small gain to you, and much loss to His Majesty's navy," Maynard chuckled. "Calm down, fellow. What's your business here in Williamsburg?"

"I came here to see the Governor."

"Ha! That passes all limits!" burst out the landlord. "He's a spy for Blackbeard! That's how the recent ship with the high officials came to be seized by Teach—"

"Confound you! I'm talking here. Shut up," snapped Maynard. . . . "To see the Governor, eh? And why?"

"To tell him the whereabouts of Captain Teach, who's the devil in person!" spat out Bertram. "And I can fetch him the devil's head, too. No one else can do it."

The landlord vented a derisive bleat. Maynard started, leaned forward, the hazel eyes blinking in his smooth boyish face. He stuck out his under lip thoughtfully; hesitated, gazing hard at Bertram.

Suddenly he gathered himself with a jerk, and sprang up.

"You," he said to the landlord, "know nothing, have heard nothing. If one word of this gets out, you'll answer as a spy yourself. Tell the gossips that I've taken the pirate to His Excellency the Governor. More than that, nothing, if you value your ears!" He turned to Bertram imperatively. "Come along."

Bertram followed to the door, gladly enough. The little lieutenant shouldered a way through the gaping crowd outside, with Bertram keeping close to the uniform tails. Then up the street and away swaggered Maynard.

"He may be a hop-o'-my-thumb, but he has a manner and a mind!" decided Bertram, and he vented a dour chuckle as he followed, thanking his luck for clearance from a closing noose. The November sunshine had never seemed so bright to Indian eyes. Stiffly marching along, Maynard turned a corner and then slackened pace, and turned.

"Still in tow, are you? I gave you a chance to duck; it'd have meant a gallows-tree. Now let's talk in private." They stood together in the empty street. "The Governor has offered one hundred pounds for Captain Teach, alive or dead. After serving under him, you'd betray him for the sake of the reward, eh?"

"I never heard o' the reward," snapped Bertram. "I want none of it. What I want is the head o' that devil! I'll kill him so he can't come back!"

MAYNARD gave a nod as though the words struck his fancy.

"Ha! I've small faith in a man who can be bought. Why do you have this great love for Captain Teach?"

"I don't love him; I hate him," said Bertram with somber mirthless eyes. "I saw my cap'n murdered by his orders. Pushed off the rail, Cap'n Lucas and all the rest, who were better men than *he*. That's why I took service under him: saved my neck so's I could get his head. Since then, I've seen monstrous things done, but have had no hand in 'em."



The boy let out a bleat:
"I know you—one of
Blackbeard's men—a
pirate! Help! Help!"

Maynard nodded again, his eyes very joyous and eager.

"I see!" he murmured. "Shrewd head. I'd like to have known Cap'n Lucas."

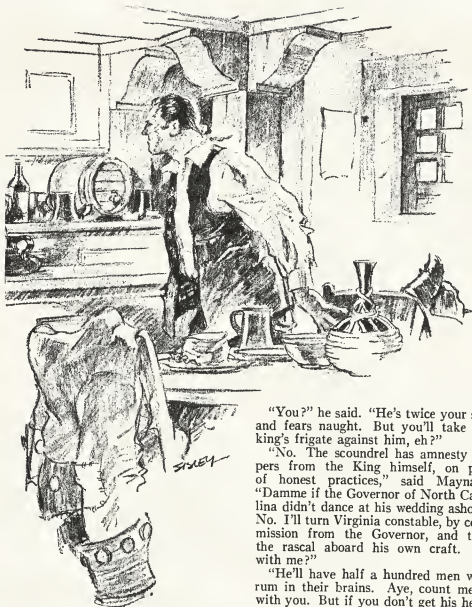
"He was like a father to me," Bertram's stolid lean features relaxed a trifle. "I loved him. Well, I waited—served that devil Blackbeard, took my time. Then I swam ashore, three mile or so, one night, and came to Virginia with my word. It was no use trying in Carolina. Teach and some of those Carolina people are too thick friends."

The lieutenant nodded. "Aye. I hear the coast merchants profit from his free spending and cheap goods. And it goes higher than that. So you're not afraid of him?"

"I am," said Bertram bluntly. "You would be too, if you could see him in his cups. A tremendous big man, pistol in hand, half a dozen more in his slings, a-chewing glass so he drivels bloody slaver, with lighted slow-matches hung under his hat, his long beard plaited and ballasted with bullets, and his mouth spitting curses with the blood—"

"Bah! A bogey for children."

"There's worse'n that; he claims to be the devil, and so he is," went on Bertram, his eyes hot again. "He shut all of us in with him below hatches, and played at hell by setting a kag o' brimstone afire. He near choked the lot of us, but there he sat, pistol in hand, roaring a snatch o' song, swallowing the smoke as if he liked it. Aye, he's the



devil in person, and I'm the only one who can kill him so's he won't come back."

Maynard regarded the other curiously, caught by the dour lack of mirth.

"D'you know where he is now?"

"Aye. He'll be outfitting a fine new ten-gun schooner. She lies in Ocracoke Inlet, in Pamlico Sound off North Carolina."

"By Jupiter!" Maynard smacked palm on thigh. "Come along to the Governor's house. We take the great Captain Teach, you and I! Stap me, but we're well met! Here I was on my way to engage that hundred pounds when I heard the rumpus."

Bertram fell in stride with the officer, who was nearly a head shorter.

"You?" he said. "He's twice your size and fears naught. But you'll take the king's frigate against him, eh?"

"No. The scoundrel has amnesty papers from the King himself, on plea of honest practices," said Maynard. "Damme if the Governor of North Carolina didn't dance at his wedding ashore! No. I'll turn Virginia constable, by commission from the Governor, and take the rascal aboard his own craft. Art with me?"

"He'll have half a hundred men with rum in their brains. Aye, count me in with you. But if you don't get his head, things will go bad. And if you kill him, he'll come alive again. He's got more than man in him; it's well known."

"He'll have a chunk of lead in him soon enough," snapped the little officer.

HIS EXCELLENCY Alexander Spotswood, lieutenant-governor of Virginia, was at home in his fine brick mansion, at work before a table in his reception-room. When he looked up, the brows of his long florid face puckered testily, then smoothed at sight of the uniform. He smiled, only to frown again at sight of the tattered and scarred Bertram.

Maynard went to the point. "Your Excellency, I'm Lieutenant Maynard of His Majesty's frigate *Pearl*; I've come to offer you the head of Captain Teach."

"Gad, sir! You have it with you?"

"I first want Your Excellency's commission to take it, and leave from my captain. This tall fellow is from Blackbeard's crew—"

"And looks it," said Spotswood.

"Teach's outfitting a new schooner in Pamlico Sound," said Bertram, his eyes smoldering. "He can be took before he sails. He thinks he's safe."

"And you'd betray him, fellow? More like, betray this officer to him. Ha! You can bide in jail until I learn the truth of it—"

"And you'll lose him, Your Honor," broke in Bertram hotly. "The waters are tricky, but I know 'em; I can pilot the lieutenant. I mean to have Teach's head, for what he did to Cap'n Lucas."

"Pardon, Your Excellency," cut in Maynard. "I believe this fellow to be honest; I'll chance him. I vow, sir, I'll bring you Teach's head! I've set out to stand up to him and kill him with my own hand."

"Eh—'pon my word, a very David!" The Governor smiled. "I hear Teach to be an enormous big man, who defies lead and steel. No offense intended, sir; I admire and honor your spirit, damned if I don't!" Powder showered from the big wig, as Spotswood's fist pounded the table. "Gad! What North Carolina daren't do, Virginia does! I guarantee you leave from your ship. The commission is yours. Fetch in Teach's head, and the hundred pounds is yours as well."

"It'll wipe out a few debts," said Maynard with a grin. "The prize-money from the pirate craft goes to my volunteers who engage. And for my pilot, here?"

"Enough for him if he keeps his own head on his shoulders."

"I want nothing from any of you," flared Bertram. "I'm in no one's pay. All I want is to kill that devil."

"Humph!" The Governor grunted. "So, Maynard, you vow to bring me Teach's head? Then I vow we'll have the skull made into a punch-bowl! Here, now—"

The Governor scrawled the commission with a furious quill, plastered it with the royal seal of the colony, and with another thump of fist was done. He sanded it, folded it and thrust it at Maynard, and the interview was over. "Where now?" said Bertram, when he and Maynard were in the street.

"Take horse, and to the bay coast. We'll not recruit here, but among sea-

men who've suffered from that devil. And one or two craft to lay him aboard. You take his head after I've killed him!"

"You'll have to do more than take his head—to kill the devil," grunted Bertram with grim foreboding.

NOW there was fast riding and hot riding, by the road southeast to the James River. A boat to the two king's ships lying there; back again to the Virginia coast. The little lieutenant fairly buzzed with impatience. Two small fishing-sloops, and a crew of thirty men to each, were ready within twenty hours. More he would not take.

Bertram, dour and silent, the scar athrob in his lean cheek, scanned the crew as the *Mary Jane* slipped out into the bay, the *Dolphin* following. A motley array: fishermen, oyster-dredgers, lobster-potters, armed with blunderbuss, fowling-piece, pistols, cutlasses, pikes. Himself at the tiller, cutlass handy. Maynard, in full dress of laced chapeau and skirted uniform coat, ruffled shirt, knee-breeches and silver-buckled shoes; girded with sword, pistols in slings.

"Once off the Carolina coast," said Maynard, as the sloop tacked through the roads for Cape Henry, "we'd best take the outside passage to the rascal's lair. He'll not be looking for attack from the seaward side."

"He'll not be looking for any; he'll be snug anchored and likely drunk," said Bertram with uncompromising conviction. "These fishing-sloops will make better weather through the Sound; if he beats us off, we can reach a shore port."

"Damme, have your way, since you know the waters! But we've not come to be beaten off. Once we pen him in with his tackle at loose ends, his head leaves his shoulders. And mind—if we find him ready and waiting for us, you'll be first to die."

He tapped his pistol. Bertram gave him one scornful glance. . . .

A day's sail down Pamlico Sound; and with twilight, the failing breeze gradually died out altogether. Maynard had been storming along, with restless eye alow and aloft, and now swore with all his heart. Ocracoke Inlet was scarcely a mile to starboard; they could even see the topmasts of a schooner pricking the eastern sky.

"I'll out sweeps and go at him!" said Maynard.

"Not so," objected Bertram dourly. "The *Dolphin's* far behind. Further, I'll

not venture these shoals in the dark. We'd be certain to ground."

"Damme, sir! I'm captain here."

"Aye, but I'm pilot. And if we hang up on a shoal in the dark, with the ebb tide coming on, what's the answer?"

"If we hang up, I'll kill you for a traitor!"

"Be damned to you," said Bertram with contempt. "You know well I'm no traitor—he's as much mine as yours. I'll take you in with morning, when the tide and breeze favor."

The little officer stared him up and down. "Stap me, but I think you've the right of it! Yet we could surprise him in the night. Daylight, eh? Well and good."

The sloop anchored. The distant *Dolphin* anchored. The tops of the schooner in Ocracoke Inlet faded, and the sky greened and darkened, and night drew on. An unpleasant night, all hands nervous and the devil too close for comfort. . . .

The dawn came on. Now Maynard was all for the sweeps, at once, but the first waft of sea breeze tickled the smooth surface of the Sound; the canvas swelled and drew; and the *Mary Jane* glided through the pink sunrise, for the hell-ship's haven. Bertram, at the tiller, glanced astern. The *Dolphin* was following, but Maynard refused to wait for her.

The ebb tide was on the turn. The sloop drew in to the bar and began to thread the shoals; the inlet was opening up.

"Every man flat along the bul'arks!" ordered Maynard. "Stay out o' sight all ye can, till we're fast to him."

L EFT now above-deck with only Maynard and one or two more, Bertram felt his lips dry and hot, his scar athrob, fear stabbing into him; the old horror, rather than fear. The inlet opened now, and the schooner in sight.

She lay broadside to, grounded by the ebb tide and awaiting the flood. At the foremast hung the bloody shirt, Captain Teach's pirate flag. And there, perched on the rail beside the main shrouds, blackly outlined against the sunrise, was the monstrous shape of Blackbeard himself, looking at them.

"Egad!" muttered the officer. "His guns are run out, his flag flaunted; he's on watch for us! If I kept my word now, you'd die in haste!"

Bertram laughed scornfully. But the rising sun dazzled the course for him. The breeze suddenly failed. As though to



Lieutenant
Maynard

mock his scorn of the threat, the sloop scraped and shoaled. She was fast, cant- ed to larboard; and Maynard had his pis- tol out, furious.

"Delivering us to him, are you?"

"If ye think so, shoot and be damned," rasped Bertram hotly. Then, regarding the schooner: "Like enough he's had warning from somewhere. He has men in his pay all along the coast. We can get off with the sweeps, I think."

Maynard swore rolling navy oaths.

"Wait. He's about to hail us."

"Ahoy there!" came Blackbeard's bull voice. Within gunshot distance, he need- ed no trumpet. "What do you want?"

Maynard cupped his hands.

"I mean to come aboard you."

"With a boat?" Teach roared out a laugh. "What d'ye want of me?"

"Your head, pirate!"

"You'll find hellfire here to roast you, bantam!" Blackbeard lifted a bottle and drank, and laughed again. His men, crowding along the rail, echoed the laugh with added jeers. "Damnation to my soul if I give you quarter!" he added.

Maynard hopped with fury. "Your soul's already damned, and so's your head! Bide where you are. I'm coming."

"Don't hurry! The fire will keep hot till the tide floats you!"

The lieutenant swung forward. "Out with the sweeps!" he stormed. "God's name, the devil makes mock of us! Oars- men, take your chance; the rest lie low. You at the tiller, get down."

"Down yourself," said Bertram. He glanced astern, and grunted. The *Dol-phin* was aground on a shoal, and her sweeps were plying, trying to get her off.

Six sweeps went out, three on a side; to the tug of the blades, the *Mary Jane*



Jack
Bertram

swung on her keel. She grated; she moved; she slid afloat and breasted the inflow of the tide.

The schooner gradually came nearer. Teach had disappeared. The rail was lined with his men, bristling with muskets and pikes. Presently, as the sloop drew nearer, Teach came again in sight, mounting the rail, every detail clear.

The slow-matches under his hat were alight, his snag-toothed jaws champed upon red froth, his sooty beard masked him from ears to chest; bottle and cutlass in hand, another cutlass hanging on him, with an armor of pistols. He swayed and bellowed obscene oaths, cursing God and the devil, defying lead and steel.

Bertram felt a stealing chill of fear and horror, and looked to see how Maynard took this monstrous reality. A trifle pale, the little officer stood firmly planted, bodkin sword gripped and eyes upon the smoking prodigy.

"We could reach him with a ball and change his tune," said one of the men.

"Fire on him, and I'll put you in irons!" snapped Maynard. Then his voice lifted high and eager, as a whiff of air fanned across the deck. "To the sheets!"

Men ran stumbling. The canvas filled; the sloop quickened, gathering way ere the puff of breeze lapsed and died.

The schooner was pointblank now, filling the view with her crowded rail. The

sloop put out her sweeps again; Teach drained his bottle and cast it at her; his men let out a ribald yell, and suddenly the guns staring from the bulwark ports gushed and roared. White smoke rolled. Bertram, white to the lips, stood sturdily to the tiller. Fear was in him, horror of the yelling devil above, hatred of that monstrous shape.

The sloop reeled as the iron hail drove into her—scraps of iron, nails, bullets, glancing and hissing and bounding. Men screamed and staggered and sprawled, to lie writhing or motionless. The gangways were crimsoned, with half the men aboard cut down or wounded as they lay. The sweeps were in a tangle; the sloop fell off.

Maynard was still up, his voice lost in the wild uproar of yells from the rail of the schooner where the smoke still hung. He came leaping for the tiller, but Bertram was already heaving at it; a breath of air lifted the smoke, lifted the *Mary Jane*, sent her blunt bowsprit clashing into the schooner just abaft the bow. Grapnels were flung; and as they hooked on, a blast of powder grenades came down, vomiting iron and sulphur.

Here, for an instant, all was confusion. Bertram caught up his ready cutlass. The breeze rifted the smoke; in the rift towered Blackbeard, a-fume, slaving.

"AWAY! Boarders away!" shouted Maynard. Bertram leaped to follow him, but they were too late. Blackbeard was already in air, leaping like the foul fiend himself, his men pouring over after him, and hurtling to the foredeck of the sloop.

The remnant of the sloop's crew rushed from cover. The sloop swung away from the schooner, swung away and away, as puffs caught her canvas and drifted her. Maynard, on the way forward, stumbled and went down, cursing. Bertram leaped past him to get into the fray. Teach was raving like a madman, as the fishermen halted his crew and fought stubbornly. Bertram was in the thick of it now, plunging headlong for that monstrous red-frothing devil, his blade ready.

Fear? Somehow all the horror was gone out of him; only a parching hate remained, with memory of Cap'n Lucas. And now Blackbeard caught sight of him and roared with insensate fury.

"You traitor dog! I'll rip the skin from your living body for this!"

Bertram was in at him, dour, silent, sultry eyes intent. The great cutlass of

Teach drove at him; he met the stroke with his own blade, and the shock went through his whole arm. Cut, slash, give and take, while steel rang around, pistols exploded, men cursed and cheered, and all the deck was smoke-drifted turmoil.

Clash upon clash—and sudden, Bertram's numbed arm fell. The blade in his hand had broken at the hilt; the huge slaving beast, untouched, roared and slashed anew. His hilt turned the down-sweeping blade, but the flat of it drove against his head, beat him to his knees as though clubbed.

He was down, on hands and knees. Somebody leaped right over him. Dizzily writhing aside, he beheld an amazing sight. Here was little Maynard, bodkin in one hand, pistol in the other, charging like a wildcat. And Teach hauling out a pistol—

Bertram, groping about for a weapon, trying to gain his unsteady feet, could feel time stand still. This was no dither to be ended by one shot, by one flashing thrust. Blackbeard loomed huge, inhuman, massive features contorted; his deep roar of fury actually lessened the explosion of the pistol in his hand, and spoiled its aim.

His frightful figure straightened aback to the crash of the second pistol. Maynard had halted his rush to aim. Another bellow escaped Teach; through the smoke, he spat blood and teeth, as Maynard's ball shattered his jaw and drove him back a pace. Like a hornet, the little officer was in upon him with a rush.

They were at it, cutlass and bodkin; clash and parry, cut and thrust, with Maynard topped by half a yard, but dancing about at fencer's straddle. Incoherent oaths burst from Blackbeard. The little thin blade was pinking him into a colander; the devil's coat was all reddened with blood.

A cutlass came clattering along the deck and spun against Bertram's ankles; he caught at it frantically and crouched to spring. The little officer, his hat gone, was down. He had come to one knee, his bodkin splintered, the steel stub raised to parry the sweeping downstroke. As it came, the blade sliced through Maynard's sword-hand—took thumb and finger. Teach belched a red-bubbling curse and bent forward, the better to line his finishing stroke.

Maynard's left hand sought the other pistol at his belt. Then Bertram was leaping, with a spring and a whirl of

his blade, all in one motion. He sent his cutlass home, fair to the mark; it sank for its full width into the thick neck of Captain Teach—and stuck fast. The hilt was wrenched from his sweaty grip as that huge bulk reeled aside and staggered for footing.

DEAD? Far from it. With gusty horror, Bertram was shocked dumb and staring; would no steel kill this devil of flesh and blood? Maynard came up, right hand dripping blood, pistol in left fist. He fired pointblank. Teach clapped hand to stomach and roared fresh formless rage.

Then, ignoring them both, Blackbeard plucked at the cutlass stuck fast in his neck. He had shed his hat and his smoking matches. Now he staggered to the mast and set his back against it, caught the cutlass-hilt with one hand, caught the point against the mast, and with a mighty heave had it out of his flesh. It clattered down along the deck; and with a dive, Maynard was after it and had the weapon.

Blackbeard had dropped his own huge blade now. He was sagging; his knees yielded; he spouted crimson from a dozen wounds, and blood was running over his plaited beard. The turmoil along the deck had lessened. Bertram, weaponless, saw Maynard poised to leap in and fight anew. Teach was not done yet. . . .

With a choked, incoherent bawl of fury, he put left hand to head as though to keep it in place, with his right snatched a pistol from the slings, and leveled it. Maynard charged in. Blackbeard steadied for deadly aim, but the pistol merely flashed in the pan. Maynard was plastered to him; they were at grips, Teach clutching the little lieutenant by the shoulder, clawing at him.

And there underfoot was the huge whinger of Blackbeard. Suddenly waking, Bertram swooped for it and had it. Blackbeard, clasping Maynard against him, fell forward and bore the officer down beneath him, weighted him flat on the deck, clutched for his throat and gripped it, up-reared for purchase as he throttled.

Bertram swung up the heavy weapon, and then paused; it was impossible to know where to strike. A convulsion seized those two figures as Maynard twisted up, Teach rolled sideways; grappling and striking, they pitched over together. But now, wounds and loss of blood took toll.

The monstrous bulk of Captain Teach shivered and relaxed to a crimsoned mass, his head askew. The slender figure of Maynard squirmed erect; gaining his feet, he shook himself like a terrier.

"Egad! Dead at last!" he panted, looking down. "Here's a hundred pounds earned. And well earned, damme!"

"Your earnings," grunted Bertram. "My head."

HE swung up the big blade, swung it in both hands, put arms and shoulders into the stroke. The steel thudded straight; it sheared on, razor sharp, through flesh and cartilage and bone, and scraped the deck. The head was lopped aside, but was still attached to the mass by a shred of hairy skin.

"My head, remember," Bertram said again, leaning on the big cutlass and looking on the work with glittering eyes.

Maynard glanced at him, glanced around, and then was darting away. The deck of the sloop had been cleared; the last survivor of the boarding-party had gone over the rail. With what men remained to him, Maynard got out the boat and tumbled into it. The oars flashed in the sunrise light, and the boat headed for the schooner.

The tardy *Dolphin* had come up and was locked in fight with the pirate craft, men surging on the decks, pistols spattering, figures vaulting the rails. Bertram sat beside the reddened mass upon the deck, paying no heed to aught else. He had freed the head from the body, and set it on the deck, the wild bloodshot eyes open and glaring in fearsome life-like manner. . . .

The fight ended, Maynard's boat came back. The little officer strode up and stood gazing at the corpse and its keeper. His riven hand was bandaged, his sandy queue was loosened; he breathed hard through thin nostrils and his hazel eyes were hot with battle-light.

"Damme, man!" he exclaimed. "What's wrong, that ye sit here staring at a villain who's harmless?"

"Naught," said Bertram in his throat. "But he may come to life again. There's only one way to kill the devil. Cap'n Lucas told me of it, afore he was murdered."

Maynard grunted. "The head goes to the Governor, as witness for the hundred pounds. You shall carry it into the bows, and lash it by the hair to the end of the bowsprit; we'll sail Blackbeard back to Chesapeake Bay, for all to see."

"Not yet," said Bertram. "Not till I make sure the devil's dead."

He had brought from under his belt a sailcloth needle, long and curved, and sat with it ready as he watched the head with wary eyes. Teach was dead a dozen times over, yet had not died, but clung to life with all the incredible virility of a primal beast. Even now, with head and body sundered, the monster might yet come to life, act, speak! The men who gathered around to stare, hesitated to touch the thing.

"They're glazing!" exclaimed Bertram suddenly. "Look!"

The scar throbbed in his cheek. His hot intent eyes, the eyes of an Indian, gripped those of Teach. Excitement rose in him; a swift gusty breath escaped his lips, as he sat poised.

"Now's the time!" he said. "Now, when the eyes are glazed—then's when he'll come back to life if no one takes action! But Cap'n Lucas told me what to do—"

The men caught his words, caught the thrilling timbre of his voice. Fear and horror touched them. They moved back hastily. The devil come to life again? It might well be. Even Maynard stood half fearful, clutching for the reloaded pistol he carried.

The huge bloodshot eyes were glazed in horror. Bertram suddenly moved, with the flashing swiftness of an animal. He leaned forward, caught the twisted bloody hair in one hand, and in the other his needle flashed, and flashed again, pricking into those staring orbs.

"Ah!" He sprang nimbly to his feet. A sharp yell escaped him—so sharp that the men stumbled backward, looking for the fiend to rise before them. "Dead! Now he's dead indeed, and a good job. *The devil is dead!* Look at him!"

SO it happened that the *Mary Jane* laid her course up Pamlico Sound for the Chesapeake, with a weird object under her stubby bowsprit. The head there, pendant by its long braided hair, turning this way and that as the sloop rolled—turning with a horrible semblance of looking about, peering about with wild glazed eyes. And seated on the bowsprit butt, watching that head as it swung, a lean shape with scarred brown cheek and vigilant hot gaze, the vengeance-glutted gaze of an Indian.

"The devil is dead," muttered Bertram. "Sure enough this time. . . . And he has Cap'n Lucas to thank for the job!"

*The gifted author of
"Captain Jack" and
"The Last of the
Thundering Herd"
offers another fine
story of the Bad
Lands.*

By

BIGELOW NEAL

Yellow Jacket

HE came by his nickname when he drifted out of the Badlands and appeared at Mrs. Delaney's back door.

"Ma'am," he said when the rancher's wife opened the screen, "could a fella get a job around here?"

Mrs. Delaney was a motherly soul; and in her the usual hospitality of the West was reinforced by an infinite compassion for the unfortunate. Anyone could see that he was exhausted, and the huskiness of his voice spoke eloquently of many hours without water.

"I don't know about a job," she said. "You can talk to Tom when the crew comes in for dinner. But I do know we got some nice cool water; and I guess

maybe, if the girls rummage around the kitchen, they can find enough victuals to feed one hungry man at least."

She led him into a big room where it was dusky and cool, where wild-cucumber vines rustled at the windows, and gave him an easy chair. The breeze from between the vines fanned his face; and later, when sparkling water had quenched his thirst, and he was seated where the edge of the tablecloth swayed in the breeze, she asked him where he was going.

Swallowing a mouthful of buttered bread and washing it down with a gulp of coffee, he cleared his throat.

"I dunno."

"Where did you come from?"



"Come, girl," he urged. Talking to her, stroking her, he led her down through the glow of the fires to the cañon floor.

He fixed his gaze on a hummingbird droning in the nicotiana plants outside the window. "I dunno."

"You don't even know where you came from?"

"No ma'am, I guess I sort of forgot."

Mrs. Delaney looked puzzled. He didn't look or act as if he were insane or dangerous. He was a big man, but thin to the point of emaciation; his eyes were sunken and carried a look of utter discouragement, and yet there was nothing about him to indicate a feeble mentality. She tried again.

"What's your name?"

After a long interval, during which he sat with puckered brows and puzzled eyes, he answered exactly as before: "I dunno."

"Land sakes, do you mean to sit there and tell me you don't even know your name?"

"Yes'm," he said, "I guess I must have forgotten everything."

And so it happened that when Tom Delaney and his haying crew and a hungry horde of cowboys came clamoring in for dinner, Delaney gave him a job with the hayers, and the men gave him the name "I-Dunno."

He worked for Delaney all summer. The other men disliked him because he was gloomy and silent. They ridiculed him and made him the butt of practical



jokes. They asked him intrusive questions, just to hear him say: "I dunno." As time wore on, under the sneers, the mockery and even contempt of his associates, he drew more and more into himself. This of course tended to make him more of an outcast among them, and so things moved in a vicious circle. In the end he came to shun their society.

IN the fall when the work was finished, I-Dunno conceived the idea of spending the winter hunting and trapping in the hills.

Delaney tried to discourage him.

"In the first place," he said, "you aint in no condition to fight a battle with those hills alone. In the second, there's a lot of tough characters out there ahead of you, and they're apt to think you're

spying on them. Those men don't stop at nothing."

But I-Dunno either did not believe this, or he felt able to take care of himself. He bought a rifle, ammunition, a camping outfit and traps. Tying his worldly goods on the back of a pony loaned him by the kind-hearted Delaney, he disappeared into the Badlands.

AT the apex of a horseshoe cañon, where it curved into the northwest so that it was protected from the cold winds of winter, and where a thick growth of ash and cottonwoods covered the floor from wall to wall, I-Dunno found a spring bubbling from under a vein of lignite coal. There he had shelter from storms; and there he had wood, water and coal as well as logs for his cabin. The cañon emptied into the valley of Beaver Creek, where mink and muskrat and beaver were plentiful; and in the chaotic land about him there were weasels, badgers, bobcats, skunks, antelope and deer.

Long before the first snow came, he built a cabin from the cottonwoods and had it chinked with mud just like the ranch-house at Delaney's. Mrs. Delaney had sent a cowpuncher with a wagon carrying some discarded household equipment, including an old laundry stove and a tin oven. The stove had no great heating capacity, but the cabin was small and snug, and with tons of coal to be had for nothing more than the labor of prying it out of its bed behind the house, the approaching winter held no terrors for the castaway.

Once established in his Badlands home, I-Dunno seldom came out of the hills. Three or four times a year he followed the valley of the Little Missouri far to the north and east, and traded his pelts for supplies at the Indian agency. There they cheated him unmercifully; and after gaining possession of his pelts with little return, they made him the butt of their ridicule exactly as the cowboys at Delaney's had. The only people who would associate with him at all were the Indians, and they tolerated him because they believed him crazy.

It would seem that a man who asked nothing beyond the right to wrestle his food and clothing from that desolate land might have been allowed to eke out a doubtful existence in peace; but I-Dunno had hardly settled himself for the winter before he learned otherwise. One day the outcast opened his door to

face a man who evidently came on no friendly errand—a greasy-appearing individual with shifty eyes. Undoubtedly he belonged to one of those gangs who made their headquarters in the Badlands, and whose business was the stealing of cattle and horses—or anything else, in fact, which they happened to find unguarded. The stranger's voice was wholly in keeping with his appearance.

"I come down here, Mr. Whatever-your-name-is, because there's some people wants to know just what you think you're doing in these here Badlands."

By this time, I-Dunno had become accustomed to abuse; but he was non-plused, nevertheless, at the sudden attack. "I—well, I kinda figgered I was tendin' pretty much to my own business."

"Is that so—is that a fact! Pretty smart guy, aint ye? Well, you listen to me a minute, Mr. Wise-man. We got the idea you aint quite as nutty as you'd like to have folks think, an' you're around here tryin' to get the dope on people who owned these Badlands before you ever showed up. Now you got one week to pack up and get out. If you aint hit one trail by that time, we'll make it our business to see you hit another. See?"

I-Dunno was not the half-starved wanderer he had been when he first came into the Badlands. Since that time he had passed through several stages in his attitude toward people in general. Now his jaw set hard, and there was a look in his usually mild eyes which plainly said he would be in the Badlands at the end of another week, despite all horsethieves to the contrary. By way of answer to the outlaw's ultimatum, his arm came from behind the door carrying his rifle, and so quickly did the ugly muzzle come in line with the stranger's stomach that the fellow was glad to let matters rest with the single threat.

THE week passed. I-Dunno made no change in his daily routine. Another week; and still nothing happened. Then one day he was climbing the side of a butte when something struck the clay almost on a level with his face. It came with a hiss, a thud and a spurt of dust. It was followed by the clear report of a rifle.

With the first impact, I-Dunno started and stood rigid, then pitched forward on his face, rolled over once or twice and lay still. Simultaneously the bad-man of the earlier visit rose from a clump of buck-brush on the opposite slope and

came forward at a run. The assassin was halfway across the cañon when a puff of smoke burst from under the body of his supposed victim, and a bullet struck at his feet. Realizing his error, he turned to run; and so great was his hurry that he threw away his rifle in favor of his maximum speed.

I-Dunno got in three more shots, but besides being excited, it is not easy to shoot downhill. In the end, the bad-man rounded a bend in the cañon and disappeared. His intended victim got to his feet, brushed the dust from his clothing and continued his climb. But after that he made most of his trips under cover of night, for he knew it would be but a question of time until his enemies struck again.

ONE night in the spring I-Dunno was returning to his cabin, and he was late. The moon had risen, and its mellow glow crowned the higher buttes and peaks, and sometimes mingled in silvery bands with the shadows from the eastern heights.

The outcast followed a boulder-strewn cañon, where slender pillars of clay supported caps of rock like giant mushrooms, where petrified logs projected from the walls and floor of the cañon, and where the sightless skulls of bison,

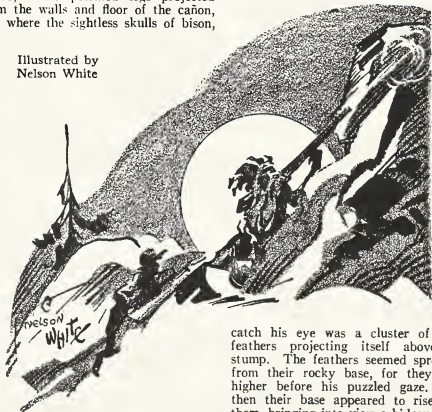
deer and horse made of the whole one vast area of weirdness, the abiding-place of age-long dead.

At a turn in the cañon, he was facing a towering square-shouldered pile of clay. The Indians called it "Hell-gate Butte" because an ancient fire, burning slowly in the lignite coal, had for years eaten at its mighty heart of clay. In summer its slopes were sheathed in pungent vapor; in winter it was surrounded and seemed supported on columns of condensed moisture rising in spectral silence from vents on the face of the strange burning butte.

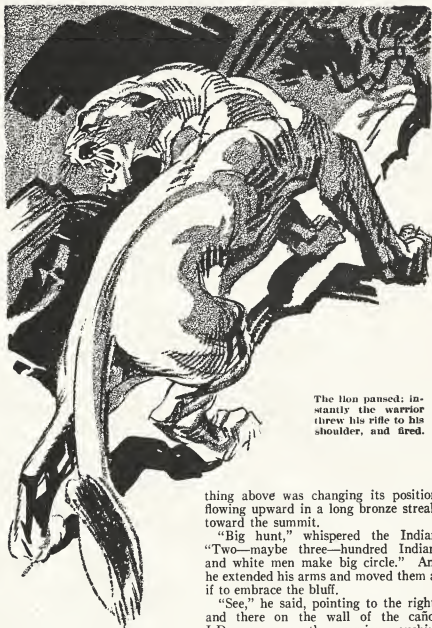
I-Dunno was but mildly interested, for he had seen the butte many times, and often had explored it from top to bottom. He knew every crack and crevice and fiery pit on its walls, and every deadly sputtering sink-hole around its base. But now he stopped suddenly and peered intently at a shimmering spot of bronze high on the slope.

While he still stared at the strange phenomenon, he became aware of another closer at hand. A petrified stump directly before him was undergoing a weird transformation. It lay in a band of moonlight; and the first movement to

Illustrated by
Nelson White



catch his eye was a cluster of eagle feathers projecting itself above the stump. The feathers seemed sprouting from their rocky base, for they grew higher before his puzzled gaze. And then their base appeared to rise with them, bringing into view a hideous disk,



The lion paused; instantly the warrior threw his rifle to his shoulder, and fired.

a glaring thing covered with patches of black and white and yellow. It had eyes, too, great staring orbs surrounded by vermillion circles. For a moment the outcast stood rigid in his tracks. Then he relaxed. He was staring into the painted visage of an Indian warrior.

The Indian beckoned the white man forward. At the same time a low hiss warned the outcast to silence. When the two stood together, the red man raised his arm and pointed to the spot of color on the butte. "Big cat," he whispered. "*Shunta-ha-ska.*" As the Indian spoke, the white man saw that the shimmering

thing above was changing its position, flowing upward in a long bronze streak, toward the summit.

"Big hunt," whispered the Indian. "Two—maybe three—hundred Indians and white men make big circle." And he extended his arms and moved them as if to embrace the bluff.

"See," he said, pointing to the right; and there on the wall of the cañon I-Dunno saw another warrior crouching in a washout. To the left there were two more in sight.

"Big cat kill sheep, cattle, horses," continued the Indian. "Thousand-dollar reward by Government and cattle association. We got him now. When circle is done, you hear big whoop. Listen!" The lion had paused again where the stunted arms of a sage-bush threw a shadow on the clay. Nothing moved, and silence had settled over the Badlands. Then from somewhere far off in the hills came a sound—a sound that began like a moan, increasing in volume and rising in pitch to a shrill yell, and

ending in a series of unearthly shrieks: It was the hunting-cry of the red man.

Instantly the warrior threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired. Flashes of orange blossomed on the slopes at either hand, and the crackle of rifle-fire echoed and reëchoed in rolling crashes against the rocks. They were advancing then, the Indian leading, I-Dunno following at his heels. Hurrying along the cañon, they were part of an endless chain of human beings closing relentlessly about the butte. Now they were dodging a sink-hole at the foot of the fiery hill and picking their way upward over the crumbling clay. On either hand the encircling line stretched away into the night.

UPWARD they struggled, over the checked, seamy surface of the butte, over broad belts of slacking lignite, over bands of varicolored clays, and over alkali where scoria lay like great blotches of blood on the hillside. Always the odor of gas followed them; and at times they looked down through narrow cracks and pits into the dull glow from subterranean fires.

They lost sight of the lion when they approached the foot of the butte; when they reached the place where she had been, she had disappeared over the crest. In the absence of a target the firing died down, but the whoops continued, ringing back and forth along the line.

In the place where the lion had stood there was nothing but claw-marks on clay. Just above, however, there were crimson spots where her claws had raked the hillside. Here I-Dunno, struck by an idea, suddenly halted and allowed the hurrying lines to pass above him out of sight. Turning, he followed the ledge a little way until he came to a cleft in the rock; now he moved very cautiously. In the back of the cleft there was a shallow cave, a beam of moonlight partly illuminating its floor; I-Dunno paused to peer long and intently into the shadowy recess. Finally he advanced slowly until he knelt at the entrance. Removing his denim jacket, he wrapped it about his arm, and put two canvas gloves on a single hand. Reaching into the shadow, he withdrew his arm again; and now against his body he pressed a writhing, hissing, spitting tawny ball. Holding the bundle close, he got to his feet and set out down the face of the butte. He scrambled to the bottom and hurried across the alkali floor, disappearing into the gloom of a gulch on the farther side.

Arriving at the cabin, I-Dunno disentangled the claws and teeth of his little captive from the jacket and placed the ringed and spotted bundle of fury on the floor.

"Now, little Yaller Jacket," he said, "your ma is dead, and you aint got no more home'n a jackrabbit. The sooner you quit scratchin' an' bitin' an' hissin' an' spittin', an' make up your mind to behave yourself, the sooner you'll become a useful member of this community of me an' you."

But Yaller Jacket evidently did not understand, for no sooner had her captor released his hold, than she struck with all her might, drawing a series of red lines across his hand. Another attempt failing to do more than glance harmlessly from his boots, she made a flying leap for the wood-box and another to crouch at bay, hissing and spitting, under the stove.

"All right, young lady, suit yourself. We'll just postpone this argument until I get some supper; then we'll see who's runnin' this shebang, me or you."

After he had eaten, I-Dunno fashioned a sort of cage out of a box and some slats, a collar from part of an old halter, and a chain from one of his traps. Again putting on his gloves, he finally cornered his warlike captive under the bed. In the end he buckled on the collar and placed the kitten in the box. A wise afterthought caused him to run the chain outside and fasten it securely to the leg of the stove; and it was well he did, for when morning came, he found she had chewed out two slats and had wrapped her chain around and around the stove-leg until she was all but choked to death.

THAT afternoon as Mrs. Delaney was putting about her flower-bed, she looked up to see I-Dunno entering the yard.

"Good gracious, but you're a stranger!" she exclaimed. "Why haven't you been to see us before?"

"I dunno."

"Oh, yes, you do. No man goes and shuts himself up in those hills and never comes out—unless there's a reason. Is it because these thoughtless cowboys make fun of you?"

"Well, maybe; yes'm, I guess I don't feel quite right with folks. Everybody thinks I'm off my bean, an' you see—"

"Yes, I see; but Tom and I don't think any such thing, and you may come here and be welcome any time you want to."

"That's the way I figgered it out," he said. "An' I come down today to see if I could get some milk and a nipple."

"Some milk and a nipple! What in the world do you want with some milk and a nipple?"

"Well, you see I sorta got some company, I—"

"A baby in those hills!"

"Yes'm—a baby cat."

Mrs. Delaney appeared much relieved. "Why, yes, I think we can find a nipple. The cook has a baby, you know, and the spring-house is full of milk. But who gave you the kitten?"

"Nobody, ma'am; I just found it in a hole."

"For heaven's sake! A wildcat?"

"Kind of wild, yes'm; but it'll be tame pretty soon because I know all about—" He broke off there with another of his puzzled looks. "Anyway, if I can get some milk and a nipple, I think I can raise it, and I'd kind of like to, because it's lonesome out there without anyone to talk to."

WHEN, that night, I-Dunno put on a pair of mittens and reached into the kitten's box, Yaller Jacket was ready to meet him halfway. When she had four sets of claws and her teeth buried in one mitten, he reached in with the other hand and began to stroke her back. It was slow work, but she finally realized the futility of war; and anyway the hand on her back was soothing, and the voice of the man carried no threat. In the end she gave over most of her opposition. When she was quieted somewhat, he held the nipple close to her mouth and squirted a tiny stream of milk against her lips. This course brought a temporary resumption of hostilities, but she had to lick it off; and here both hunger and thirst came to the aid of her captor. . . .

Day after day he worked with her. Always gentle and patient, he talked to her, and petted her and fed her, until gradually her fears began to subside. In time, the nipple was discarded and she drank from a bowl. Then too, she was allowed the full length of her chain, for she had given over her assault on his ankles from her lair under the stove. In a month she would lie across his lap and sleep as he stroked her head and back. In another, he had taught her to lead, and took her with him as he hunted in the hills.

From the first he had insisted upon absolute obedience. Some inner sense

seemed to guide him in guarding himself against the day when she would weigh more than he, when a single stroke of her paw might be fatal. He clipped her claws just enough to dull their needle points, and then taught her not to use them when he played with her. If she grew playfully excited and opened her pink mouth to strike, he ran the thumb of his mitten down her throat and gagged her. Lastly he fashioned a muzzle of wire, and never allowed her to kill a living thing; her food was cooked, and she did not know the taste of blood. And he taught her to lie down at his slightest command. Time and time again he would suddenly exclaim, "Down, sister, down!" until she learned to stretch out on the floor with never a moment of hesitation.

One of the most difficult lessons was teaching her to carry things, to pick up his gloves and bring them to him. This trick, natural to a dog, is very difficult for a cat to learn; but here again some innate talent came to his aid, and the time came when she would pick up and fetch and carry at his command.

For a time he made regular trips to Delaney's for milk, but after a while he ceased to come with regularity, and the rancher's family saw him no more except on occasions when he brought venison or prairie chickens as a thank-offering for the kindness he had received.

Thus the summer passed and winter came again.

Meanwhile his enemies made no further move. Indeed he gave them little opportunity, for traveling mostly at night and never following the same trail twice in succession, he was difficult to ambush. And when snow came, the danger was largely over until spring, for horse-stealing is not profitable when the hills are covered with snow.

ON the evening of a day in midwinter I-Dunno was putting his supper on the table when he heard a knock. A preliminary glance from the window showed him two men, one of them from Delaney's ranch and the other a stranger. The outcast opened the door.

Blinking from partial snow-blindness, the two visitors entered, and the cow-puncher introduced I-Dunno to the stranger. "Mr. Dailey," he said, "this is the feller we call I-Dunno. He's the man Tom sent you up here to see."

Mr. Dailey and the outcast shook hands, and the former stated his errand.

"I've been hearing about the game in these hills for years, from my sister Mrs. Delaney. She said if I came out, she thought you might put me up for a few days and possibly get me a chance at a few deer or a big sheep. Naturally I sha'n't expect you to take the trouble for nothing, and I brought along some extra groceries in case you hadn't been to town lately."

He too was a big man, with a kindly smile partly hidden by a gray mustache, and the friendly tone of his voice found an answer in the man who had been all but friendless for so long.

"Why, sure, Mr. Dailey, I'd be dog-gone glad to have you stay. With this show we ought to find most anything in the line of game. Sit right down here and have a bite to eat: this deer meat aint so tough as it might be, and I got about a yard of dough-gods left, and the coffee's hot if it aint no better, an'—"

"That's fine!" exclaimed Dailey. "I'm hungry as a bear. We'll unload this stuff, because the lad doesn't want to stop; and then I'll be with you."

The cowpuncher drank a cup of coffee and had a bite while the others brought in the groceries. When he had gone, I-Dunno dished up the balance of the dinner and motioned his guest to a seat.

DAILEY had, of course, heard of the outcast's queerness, and was more or less prepared for oddities in I-Dunno's behavior; but when the latter gravely set a third place, even to pouring the additional cup of coffee, his visitor was frankly puzzled. Nor was he greatly enlightened when his host placed a short section of cottonwood stump by the table and pulled his own stool up beside it. And Dailey's rapidly growing theory that the trapper was something more than queer crystallized into a conviction when I-Dunno, apparently speaking to nothing more animate than one end of the room, remarked in a casual voice: "Well, Yaller Jacket, I guess we're ready for a bite to eat."

Smilingly, amused by the little by-play, Dailey was in the act of dropping a spoonful of sugar into his coffee when a burlap curtain hanging from the side of I-Dunno's bunk parted, and through the opening came a massive reddish-brown, white-throated head and a pair of eyes whose pupils glowed dull orange as they slowly closed in adjustment to the light. For a moment the visitor stared spellbound while the apparition

paused and the great pink mouth yawned to expose rows of saber-like teeth. Then the mouth closed, and the great tawny body flowed slowly from under the bed.

WHERE another man might have bolted through the door or reached for a weapon, Dailey sat still, contenting himself with an exclamation: "My Lord, what a cat!" And then as the lion stretched herself to her full length: "She must be nearly ten feet long!"

"Eight feet from tip to tip," announced her owner, "and three feet high. She weighs better'n two hundred, and she aint full grown by a long shot. . . . Come, sister, sit up to the table and let the gentleman see how you behave."

With a final yawn the lion moved slowly to her stool and climbed into her place. After a single sniff at her plate and a glance about the table, she centered her calm gaze on the stranger across from her, and studied him with a face as emotionless as a feline sphinx.

"My Lord, what a cat!" exclaimed Dailey for the second time. "Where did you get her?"

I-Dunno appeared to be in his element at last. He told his guest how he had found Yaller Jacket when she was a kitten, and of the long hours he had worked to train her. "Mr. Dailey," he said, "she's a wonder. Maybe she don't understand English, but you'll think so to watch her. She'll do anything I tell her to, and she's doggone' near got the nature of a dog."

Apparently tickled to death at the chance to show off his mighty pet, he demonstrated how Yaller Jacket would eat from her plate so daintily as to push not a crumb onto the table, how she had learned to drink coffee from a cup; and afterward, when the meal was finished, he put her through a series of intricate feats which demonstrated an understanding on her part all but perfect, and a control on his part which was absolute.

When Yaller Jacket had been dismissed and the curtains of her den had closed behind her, Dailey suddenly leaned forward in his chair, faced his host and asked abruptly:

"Did you ever hear of Herald and Dailey?"

I-Dunno was reaching for a dishpan on the wall. He stopped, with his arm still outstretched. "Why, it seems to me like I—" His gaze was fixed. The muscles of his face worked convulsively.

"Ever hear of Barnum and Bailey?"



A great tawny
body struck the
would-be killer
with the force
of a thunderbolt.

The outcast was rigid. He was gazing at his visitor as one fascinated.

"Sells-Floto?"

I-Dunno stirred as if some one had struck him a light blow.

"Hammelbeck and Rung?"

"My God!" cried I-Dunno. "Where have I been all this time!"

Dailey leaned back in his chair. "I thought so," he said. "I thought it was something like that when my sister was telling me about you; I've heard about people with this same loss of memory. I'm Dailey, of Herald and Dailey, and when I saw how you had trained that cat, it gave me an idea. Nobody but a professional cat-man could do what you have done with her."

I-Dunno had dropped onto a stool, his elbows on the table, his hands clasped tightly against his head.

Dailey was talking again.

"How much do you remember now?"

"God, Mr. Dailey, I remember a lot, but it's all mixed up. I—"

"Isn't your name Conway—John Conway?"

The outcast straightened again; a rush of color stained his cheeks. "That's it," he cried, "that's it! I got that much. I can see the circus. And the cats! I can hear the band! I can see—"

"Sit down again, Conway. Take it easy. You're on the right track now, and maybe I can help you a bit more. As I remember it, you were working with Hammelbeck and Rung. They said you had been in tough luck for some time. If I am not mistaken, you had no folks; but you owed a lot on your act, and some one was trying to take it away from you.

Then you played down at Burtonville. In pulling out, the train was wrecked. You lost your act, and disappeared yourself. Remember any of this?"

"All of it," acknowledged the man they had known as I-Dunno. "Some things are kind of hazy yet but it's clearing up fast. I must have struck right out into the hills and hoofed it for over a hundred miles."

"Funny thing!" exclaimed Dailey. "It's a darned funny thing how a cog will slip in a man's mind and leave the past a blank, and yet allow him the benefit of previous experience. A little while ago you couldn't remember even your name, but you have put everything

you ever knew about cats into the training of this one. Now of course you know I'm making you an offer to go out with our show in the spring. Right now I think we better hit the hay. You look pretty well shot, and I don't imagine a good sleep will do me any harm, either."

But there was little sleep for John Conway that night. For hours he lay awake living over the events of his boyhood, the memories of the time when he first ran away from the children's home and joined the circus, and the long hard years before he won a place of his own in the amusement world. Now it seemed that fate had squared accounts with him. To reassure himself, he reached his hand under the bed and snapped his fingers. From out the gloom a great rasping tongue ran across the back of his hand. Had he known that two men had made camp that same night in a cañon less than a mile away, and that their business was solely with him, perhaps rest would have been even slower in coming.

WHEN Conway awoke, the morning was advanced, but evidently his mind had spent the interval of unconsciousness to good advantage, for his memory of the past was clear. The circus man was getting breakfast, and Yaller Jacket had used the full length of the chain which limited her wanderings during the night, to stretch herself halfway across the floor and lie lazily watching the self-appointed cook.

After breakfast, when Conway had given the lion her morning exercise, the two men set off into the hills. It was warm, and thawing so rapidly that tracks made the night before were nearly erased, but the guide knew his business; and when darkness brought them home, they carried slung between them a five-pronged buck which Dailey had shot.

That night the deal was made which would reestablish Conway as a useful member of the circus world; and it was agreed that after the hunt, Conway and his pet should go out with Dailey and on to the winter quarters of the circus.

"Seems to me it's a good idea," said Dailey. "I've got a cat act now that's too slow. You can take it over, and let Yaller Jacket here do the real stuff while you're training the—"

Neither had heard a sound. Neither to the men nor to the sensitive ears of the lion had come the slightest warning when, with a crash and splintering of wood, the door flew open and two men

stood in the opening. Fortunately the first rush of air blew out the lamp, and probably saved the lives of the men at the table. After that it was a wild mêlée, wherein the oaths and grunts of fighting men were punctuated by darting streaks of flame and the roar of weapons.

DAILEY, reaching for his rifle, then remembering it was not loaded, swung with all his might at a figure before him. Under the impact the rifle-stock splintered to bits, but the figure sagged back into the dark. The circus man's triumph was short, however, for the back-handed sweep of a heavy pistol caught him behind the ear, and he too lay motionless along the wall.

Meanwhile Conway, hearing the impotent click of a pistol, lunged at the remaining outlaw. But he tripped over the feet of Dailey; and it seemed that the battle was over. The outlaw raised his pistol and swung downward. The blow carried force enough to crush the fallen man's head; but even as it fell, a great tawny body came out of the darkness, rose in a graceful arc and struck the would-be killer with the force of a thunderbolt. Yaller Jacket had struck at the base of the outlaw's neck and now a fourth body lay still upon the floor.

When Conway got to his feet and scratched a match, he saw Dailey trying to pull himself upright with one hand while he nursed a bump on his head with the other. The outlaw who had gone down first lay breathing heavily. The one who had received the brunt of the lion's assault lay in a pool of blood.

"Cæsar's ghost!" muttered the circus man, holding his head with both hands and looking up at the shakes, "I thought the roof fell on me." Then, noticing Conway bending over Yaller Jacket's victim: "What happened here? Did you do that?"

Conway shook his head. "No; I don't remember of hitting him at all. I fell over something, and the next minute he came down on top of me. Maybe he—" Conway suddenly broke off and sprang across to the bed. Pulling aside the curtains, he stooped and then straightened again. His face was white. "She's gone!" he cried, and bolted from the cabin. . . .

Two nights afterward, Delaney, the circus man and some of the former's men found John Conway lying on the floor of a cañon deep in the heart of the Badlands. At first they had followed his trail in the snow and mud, working it

out step by step. Occasionally they saw claw-marks, showing that Conway had been on the trail of the lion. Later it had become increasingly difficult, for the weather was warm, the snow had mostly gone and now much of the ground was bare. They found where he had spent the night huddled in a clump of brush by the trail and the tracks that he made throughout the following day showed that he was slowing down, sometimes wandering from the trail and frequently halting. They were not surprised to find he had given out; and it was not until long after they had established him in a comfortable bed at Delaney's that he showed any signs of reviving.

Even then it was only to mutter something about Yaller Jacket and, "I got to find that cat." Pneumonia followed, and for weeks he seemed a hopeless case. It was Mrs. Delaney's careful nursing that finally pulled him through. But for months he could do no more than sit helpless in a chair by the window.

SPRING passed and summer came. There had been letters from Dailey. He had taken a liking to the "cat-man," as he called him, and every letter brought a renewal of his offer. "Hurry up and find that cat," he said in the last one. "I hate to lose her."

Mrs. Delaney was Conway's only confidant.

"I've got to find her, Mrs. Delaney. She'll get into trouble sooner or later, and they'll kill her like they did her mother."

"But she'll be wild again, my boy. You can't do a thing with her even if you find her."

"Maybe not, but I didn't spend all those months working with her, to give up now. I'll be strong enough in a few days to get on her trail again. I think I know where it leads."

Conway was counting on his knowledge of cats in general. Yaller Jacket had not taken advantage of the first opportunity to desert him. It was not likely that fear of the battle in the cabin had driven her far away. He reasoned that her leaving was partly associated with the mating season of her kind.

Eventually he did set out, but his attempt was a dismal failure. All but exhausted by the unusual exertion, he reached his home to find that some one had set fire to the cabin, and nothing remained but ashes and the twisted iron of his bed-spring and stove. A careful

search convinced him that his belongings had been stolen first, because there remained no trace of his rifle, his traps or even a frying-pan. Utterly discouraged, he turned back toward Delaney's ranch.

One night a cowpuncher brought in word that buffalo wolves had appeared on the range, and several calves were missing from the cow herd. Again the report was the loss of a colt from the horse herd. Delaney shifted his herd about, and located the beef herd where the cows had been. Then it was a three-year-old steer, killed and torn to pieces almost within gunshot of the night-herd-er. The neighbors were having trouble too, and when one of them lost a valuable stallion, a grand hunt was organized to clear the Badlands of these marauders. Simultaneously, Conway had an idea—a bit late, for he had not heard of the hunt until the day it was to begin.

All day long groups of horsemen had been gathering at Delaney's ranch only to move on again, deployed in a fan-shaped line reaching out into the hills. It was another holiday for the red men too, and many of them harked back to other days and dressed themselves in all the paint and feathers of their kind. By midday the line was formed stretching for miles around a common center, which in this case, as before, was the massive pile of Hell-gate Butte.

ABOUT noon, John Conway suddenly walked out of Delaney's yard and disappeared among the hills, plodding steadily on toward Hell-gate Butte.

Conway was not alone as he approached the gas-filled cañons at the foot of the burning butte. Deer passed him in high bounds, and coyotes, awed by the converging lines from which they fled, paid little attention to the plodding man. Jackrabbits too scurried by, some going one way and some another, for now they were crossing from side to side of the deadly circle.

Now a spatter of rifle-fire from somewhere close behind warned Conway that the lines were closing in. Suddenly he halted. Just as on that night so long ago, he saw something like a streak of dull gold flowing along a ledge far above him. He changed his course, struggling up the crumbling walls, his heart beating like a hammer within his chest.

He reached the ledge. But he did not pause for breath. He knew of a cove in a gulch ahead. Entering the gulch, he followed an outcropping rim of sand-

stone which was wide enough to offer footing. Still he saw nothing.

The gulch petered out to a shallow washout and there was no trace or sign. Farther along, where a pyramid of coal slack had sifted down to the ledge, he saw the track of a mountain lion, and fresh; but it was too large for Yaller Jacket, and for the first time he stopped in doubt. He was unarmed.

Dropping to his knees, he began to crawl. If he could get close enough to see the den, he might yet have time to retreat if it were not the lion he sought. Just a few feet more to go—and now he was sliding flat, lifting himself ahead with his hands. Then without warning, a section of sandstone gave way and he plunged head-first down into the washout. But here luck was with him. A stunted tree grew almost horizontally from a layer of clay on the wall. He struck it with his chest and threw his arms around it, holding with all his might. For an instant he clung there, but his strength gave out. He was losing his hold. The rough bark of the tree tore the sleeves of his shirt to ribbons and raked flesh from his arms and hands. Then he was falling again.

But the tree had saved him after all, for he struck on another ledge in a pile of sifting clay.

Sitting there, he held his head in his hands. This he knew was the end of his last hope. He was too exhausted to go on, and now a wild high-pitched cry came up from the foot of the butte.

SUDDENLY he heard another sound close at hand—a hiss, ending in a rasping spitting snarl. He opened his eyes. Ten feet away, above him and on the opposite wall of the washout two yellow orbs glared into his own. Then a lion's head arose from behind a rock. A great golden body followed and he was face to face with the largest lion he had ever seen.

He tried to struggle to his feet but his muscles refused to function. The lion was getting ready to spring and a glance showed him the reason for her anger. Below her two kittens were playing at the mouth of the den, and one of them opened his mouth to hiss and spit in imitation of his mother. Now the lion was stretching her body down the face of the rock. Conway saw her reach down with one foot for a surer grip. Her mouth was open and her cruel fangs seemed to drip fire in the moonlight, her tail was lash-

ing from side to side and the muscles on her legs and back were bulging in great knots as she gathered herself to spring.

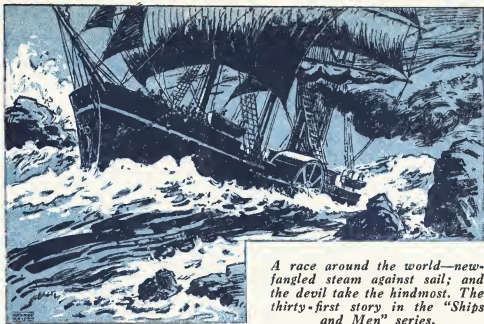
IN that instant, when his life hung in the balance, Conway's eyes began to clear. He knew now he was facing his Yaller Jacket, full-grown though she was. With the clearing of his sight, his mind too went into action and just as the lion crouched for the final leap, he cried: "Down, sister, down!" He could see no effect—but she did not spring. "Down, Yaller Jacket, down!" Still she did not spring. "Down," he cried again. Now the bulges in her great muscles were fading out. He cried again: "Down, I say!" and slowly the mighty cat relaxed. Slipping to the foot of the washout, he scrambled up the opposite side. He heard her move and a pebble rattled past him. "Down, sister, down!" Then he was at the foot of the rock. A single sign of fear now and he was lost. He reached up, stroked her head—and heaved a sob of relief as she lay quiet under his hand.

He had won the first round, but what of the next? To get her away from the kittens would be impossible, to get hold of them meant a tussle and the probability that the mother would turn on him like a thunderbolt. But he must risk it. Stepping up beside Yaller Jacket, he buried his fingers in the slack of her neck and pulled her down toward him. She made no resistance, although once her mouth opened and a soft hiss formed in her throat. Crouching there, holding his arm around the great cat, he waited until the line of hunters had climbed above and passed them.

Now came the final test. Pulling off his shirt, he dropped it over one of the kittens. It was not a difficult feat because they were both under their mother and too busy to notice, or care. Quickly rolling the struggling captive in the shirt, he spoke to the great cat again.

"Come on, girl, come," he urged.

Nothing happened and he tried once more, "Come, girl, pick it up and come." His hours and hours of training were not wasted after all; the habit of obedience had not been blotted out. She got slowly to her feet, picked up the remaining kitten and accompanied him down the face of the butte. Talking to her, stroking her head at every step, he led her down through the glow of the fires, threading his way between the sink-holes to disappear behind a curtain of blue-white gas, stretched across the cañon floor.



A race around the world—new-fangled steam against sail; and the devil take the hindmost. The thirty-first story in the "Ships and Men" series.

Stormalong

By H. BEDFORD-JONES
and CAPTAIN L. B. WILLIAMS

JACK RANKIN was a hard man, tall, frosty-eyed and short-tempered. "Stormalong" Rankin, they called him, and for reason aplenty. He drove his ship by the shortest distance between two points, and be damned to wind, weather or human life; but that made owners' profits and his own. Under him the *Naiad* was the fastest ship afloat, on the long haul.

In those days men swore by all sorts of things, for the new things were unproven, and the old things wore well; Stormalong Rankin swore by sail and oaken bottom and clipper bow and a crew worked to the bone. He had no use for steam and paddles, for newfangled iron ships; and a large share of the world agreed with him. He could outsail any steamer going, and was not alone in that. Any good clipper ship could do the same.

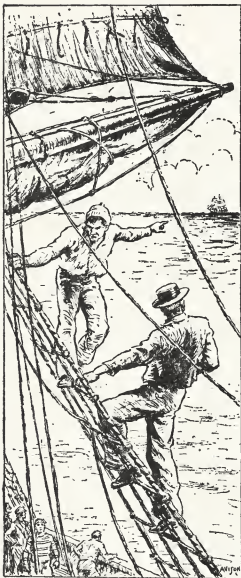
Stormalong was no man to love, but he was a man who did things. When he walked into the Tontine House bar and found that Tommy Lund was made cap-

tain of the *Porpoise* and was posting a notice about letters for Canton,—all mail went from the Tontine House in those days,—he laughed long and loud.

"Why, Tommy was mate under me, and no damned good!" says he. "So it's Cap'n Lund now, is it? Master of the *Porpoise* hybrid—square rig and paddle-boxes! Lord save us, what does he want with mail for Canton and the China Seas? Those new ships of iron can make no speed either by canvas or by steam! Knock a hole in 'em, and it's like knocking a hole in a crockery teapot afloat in a tub! When's Tommy pulling out?"

Somebody told him; they were crowded about him thick as flies, every one with an ax to grind, for Stormalong was a great man among shipping-men. Here in New York, where shipping was growing more important than along the New England coast, he could grant many a favor or pull many a rope.

"What?" he rapped out. "Two days ahead o' me? Why, I'll beat him to China



"It's her! It's her!" And the *Natal* it was.

and meet him outbound before he drops his Foochow pilot!"

Just then, in came Cap'n Lund. The two shook hands, with a deal of apparently good-natured talk and hearty words and back-slapping; and indeed Lund was a man of great good humor. A big fellow, unruffled and easy in his ways, with a wide, generous mouth and a cautious eye. None of your dandies like Stormalong; no attempt to impress the world with his explosive energy, by dint of heady oaths and hot barking words.

He leaned over the bar, and the two had a drink together; and he shook his head slowly when Stormalong rallied him about his hybrid tub on a China voyage.

"True enough," said he in his calm way. "But you and I are different, Cap'n Rankin; and owners are different, and ships are different. You're running for tea and a record passage and crack on everything! Quick results and quick profits."

"Aye, and results show," said Stormalong.

"My owners are a new outfit," went on Lund. "No tea for us, no racing and killing crews; make haste slowly—that's the word. Cargo space and safety. And at that, we'll make a fast passage."

"With engines and coal to lug, and an iron bottom?" The derisive laughter of Stormalong lifted high and sharp. "Not a chance, Cap'n Lund, not a chance!"

"Would you come along to the Brooklyn yards and look over the *Porpoise*?" Lund rolled an inquiring, amiable eye. "There's a new idea or two going into her."

Stormalong looked at his fat gold watch, and nodded; and they went off together. The men at the bar looked after them, and one nudged another:

"There goes the devil, and polite as could be!"

"Ah, but Tommy Lund's no fool," said the other. . . .

He was no fool, indeed; still, he scarcely reckoned what evil could fill a man's heart, himself being without envy and malice. Captain Rankin had discharged him as mate, railing at him for a slow stick and a softy unable to work the crew properly; and any man who wrongs another comes to hate that other. Lund was, in reality, anxious to win the esteem and admiration of Stormalong; but when they came to look over the rebuilt *Porpoise* as she took in cargo, even his well-argued convictions were shaken by the positive, aggressive derision of Rankin.

"Nothing new about iron ships," he said. "They've been tried out for years, and they're coming into use more and more—"

"Ha!" broke in Stormalong. "They have their points, but they're no good. Too heavy. Sails can't drive 'em; your dinky engines can't drive 'em. Takes too much coal to drive the blasted engines, and coal costs money. That eats up the profits. It's been demonstrated over and over."

"Sure," admitted Cap'n Lund, rubbing his broad, smooth chin uneasily. "Sure. But this is different. She's barque-rigged; we'll use the paddle-wheels only to increase her speed and in emergencies."

"Barque-rigged she is," Stormalong agreed contemptuously. "Think of the *Naiad* with her canvas rising to heaven! Think of how she foams along! You'll never equal her speed with this barque. Besides, what have you got under your feet? An iron pot, that's all. Strike a spike of coral, and she'll sink before you can get your pumps greased!"

"No, no, Stormalong!" protested Cap'n Lund, and pointed to the ship, whose holds were fast filling. "Something new there. A double bottom, against just such an emergency; more, the holds are divided off into compartments by bulkheads."

"What?" rasped Stormalong. "Bulkheads? Never heard of such a thing!"

"You will in future. Suppose the worst happens, a hole punched in her side or even an outbreak of fire. That compartment is closed off by iron doors. The water can't spread. The fire can't spread. Why, it'll change all shipbuilding!"

Stormalong uttered a roaring laugh.

"Hark, my lad! Theories are all very fine, and not worth a damn. Double bulkheads and a double hull—that'd be better yet, eh? Weight! There's your answer. To make this weight forge through the water at even six knots, you'd need double engines and ten times the canvas!"

LUND'S blue eyes took on an anxious, doubtful look. Cap'n Rankin pointed now to the forward deck with its pronounced camber, with its iron rails instead of the usual bulwarks.

"Look there! Your hands will be awash like a halftide rock all the time!" he exclaimed in scorn. "No bulwarks at all to fend off the seas!"

"Nor to hold 'em aboard." Lund brightened a trifle. "There's no earthly reason for bulwarks, except old custom. And there's every reason against them. Think of your own *Naiad*! Her deck's like a swimming-pool half the time; when she gets a bit of a list, the load of water tends to keep her from righting. But here—well, the *Porpoise* will deserve her name in heavy weather. The water will be gone as soon as it comes aboard."

"And your men washed away with it," Stormalong rasped. "No, no! You've got a crazy thing here. Not to mention the compass trouble in an iron ship."

"That'll be taken care of, never fear."

"Aye, I've been aboard iron ships before this, my lad; I know all about your deviation figuring and so forth," stormed on Cap'n Rankin contemptuously. (And

months later, Lund was to recall this remark at a bad moment.) "What's this I hear about you being bound for Chefoo? Thought it was Canton?"

"No; the orders are to make Chefoo first," said Lund. "A lot of coal to unload there."

"Why, I'm making Chefoo first myself!" Rankin exclaimed, staring.

Lund broke into a hearty laugh.

"Not first, Cap'n! Not ahead of me, anyhow."

"You don't seriously expect to equal my time outward bound?"

"No; I should beat it easily," Lund said amiably. "Your fastest day's run isn't your average, by a good deal; but my average will be brought up to a steady mark, thanks to the engines. You know the old fable about the tortoise and the hare."

"Aye, and I know the sea, and I know folly from wisdom, and I'll put a thousand dollars on it!" Rankin cried. "A thousand or ten thousand on clipper bow against straight stem, on fact against untried theory!"

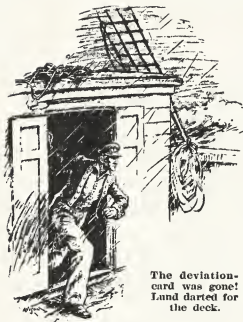
Tommy Lund was easy-going, slow to wrath, never a man to wager; but the rasping voice and the edged words got under his skin. It is a hard thing to chart a clear course against headwinds of derision.

Hot words went to worse, and caution plunged overboard. There on the wharf the bets were made—money in the bank, master's share of the forthcoming voyage, credit pledged and reputation at stake. Old Israel Long, one of Cap'n Lund's owners, came up in time to write down and witness the bets. He pleaded against the folly, but it was hot blue eyes against lurid black ones, with hatches ripped off old dislikes, a crowd ringing in the two captains and eager voices whooping up the bets. No backing out now, and devil take the loser!

BOTH ships were to sail in two days. The two captains, impressive in their blue broadcloth, their stovepipe hats, calmed down and shook hands and smiled at parting. Old Israel Long, standing at Cap'n Lund's elbow and watching Stormalong stride off with a gang of admirers at his heels, groaned under his breath.

"Thomas, Thomas, you're a terrible fool for taking chances!" said he, shaking his head anxiously. "There's many a mishap in a long voyage."

"Poor seamanship, many mishaps," said Cap'n Lund tersely.



The deviation-card was gone! Land darted for the deck.

"Tut-tut! The point is, man, your ship's not proven. Stormalong may be right about the weight; if so, where are you?" Old Israel wagged his head again. "Proud of your iron ships and engines, aye! But pride's a mortal bad thing at times."

Damn all croaking! Lund tried desperately to forget the words, and could not.

THE two craft got away the second morning at ebb-tide, with a brisk sou'-wester blowing. This meant head-winds for the sailing-vessel; but the *Porpoise*, spouting black smoke, paddled out into the East River and headed for the Narrows. As she passed Gibbet Island, where pirates had once hung in chains, the foremast lookout reported the *Naiaid* under way, but not following the steamer.

Stormalong Rankin, instead, was heading through Hell Gate with everything set to the sou'-wester.

Lund, pacing the quarterdeck, felt a thrill of admiration for the man. Only supreme seamanship could work such a large vessel safely through Hell Gate; even the Sound was not exactly comfortable for a square-rigger in a gale. But he knew Rankin would win to sea around Block Island, and be on equal terms when they started the long leg down to Rio.

Holding within sight of each other almost every day, the two ships made good runs to the equator, crossed, and picked up the fresh southeast trades. Neither skipper was doing any pushing. Lund spent long days getting his deviation-card in shape, with scrupulous exactness.

With a hull and engines of iron, which readily take on magnetism and themselves become magnets, every projecting point about the vessel became a pole of these projected magnets. He knew the danger here. On the different directions of the ship's head, these various projections changed position relative to the compass needle, which was affected by the dominant force. Thus, for each heading, was a different deviation.

Determining these deviations by observations, tabulating them, testing them repeatedly, Lund finally finished the job. With a deep breath of relief, he at last tacked his deviation-card to the inside of the chart locker door, handy for applying the readings when he laid off his course. It was done, and well done!

So was the first leg of the voyage. Almost neck and neck, they raised the bold headland of Cape Frio, forty-four days from New York; then it was crack on all sail, stoke the fireboxes, and race for the entrance!

The sea breeze ended with ebbing day, however. When Lund made the entrance islands of Pai and Mai, the *Naiaid* was far to the rear, her canvas flapping dismally; and there she was forced to anchor all night. The *Porpoise*, her paddles threshing mightily, churned past Sugar Loaf to port, answered the hails of Fort Santa Cruz to starboard, and dropped anchor below Cobras Isle, where the port doctor came aboard. The first leg was won.

With daybreak, the land breeze was striking off with strong gusts, with squalls of wind and rain and peals of thunder. Half an hour passed, then an hour; and out of the storm-wrack loomed a tall ship coming in under topsails and reefed foresail. Word of the race and the wagers had by this time spread through all the assembled ships and along the waterfront; when Stormalong brought his vessel to anchor, a burst of cheers from the *Porpoise* was echoed from the harbor.

Nothing lost, nothing won; after four days the anchors were weighed together, and both ships passed out to sea and headed on down the long reach south.

Off the Plate River they ran into a strong pampero. Severely battered, and pushed far out to sea, they were separated and lost to sight of each other. After passing the parallel of 40 S., however, Lund one morning picked up the *Naiaid's* canvas. He laughed softly to himself, and served out extra grog with a glad hand. He had not pushed things a bit, but he had picked up that lordly craft

handily; this told him all he needed to know.

They hung in company now, preparing for heavy weather off the Cape; the best canvas was bent; new running-gear was rove; thick clothing was broken out. And ahead was coming the first test. Lund made ready for it coolly, methodically.

They had a brush with a twister off Patagonia, but stayed together to the Falklands, and thence to Staten Island, lying east of Tierra del Fuego. And there came separation; the *Porpoise*, under easy canvas and spouting smoke, steamed boldly for the strait of Le Maire.

Stormalong Rankin luffed up and hesitated, as he watched his rival head for the inward passage. For once, however, prudence ruled his action. Baffling winds, treacherous currents, tremendous rises and falls of tide, denied those iron straits to him. With an oath he filled away and headed around the Cape.

Before evening he caught it, as mist raced down from the southwest. All hands were frantically summoned, light sails clewed up and handed, topsail hal-yards let to by the run, reef tackles hauled out, buntlines and spilling-lines bowsed tight. With a blast of sleet like grapeshot, the gale burst.

Gale followed gale as the days passed. It was three full weeks ere Rankin could work up into the meridian of 80 W. and into fair winds. Then, with all the canvas she could stagger under, the *Naiad* bore for Valparaiso.

And all this while the *Porpoise* had been aground off Punta Arenas.

WHEN Lund came into Valparaiso harbor, he was in despair, had completely given up hope. When he learned, from the bumboatmen who came aboard, that the *Naiad* had left port a fortnight earlier, he plucked up heart. A lead of

two weeks was bad, yes, but he knew his Pacific; he had been all the while gambling on the Pacific, and the long stretch to the Sandwich Islands, and the longer one beyond. Many a time had he made the run to Chefoo and Canton, and only once had he gone bowling ahead with never a bad break to stay his ship. This time he was prepared for breaks.

He put in to anchorage and began to discharge mails and cargo. Going ashore with the port doctor, Lund was greeted on the pier by a smiling Chileño who announced himself as a runner from the Old House at Home, a sailors' boarding-house at the foot of Maintop Hill, close to the waterfront.

"What's this?" growled Lund as the man handed him a dirty envelope.

"It's known you were coming, Cap'n Lund. Two men have been in jail for the past few days; they paid me to watch for you."

Lund tore open the envelope and took out a letter, crudely scrawled in pencil:

Captain Lund of the Porpoise.

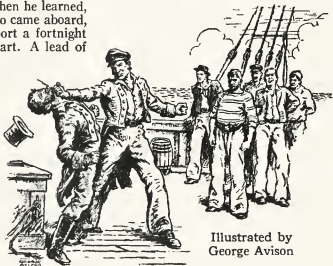
Sir and good friend to sailermen:

We be two hands in Jale here. The sojers treat us terble. Work all day and bean soup with no beans. Black bred and coffee which aint coffee. We be starving and dying from hard work and no food. We skipped from the Rainbow ship but we beg to God that Captain Lund will bale us out and will work our heads off if he helps us leeve this dam hole which aint fitten for american sailer men. Respekfully,

Sam Peak

Hook Avery.

Lund smiled grimly as he stuffed the letter into a pocket. He had been a fore-



"I've wished for this day!" said Lund . . . and smacked his fist into the dark face.

Illustrated by
George Avison

mast hand; he knew how easy it was for a seaman to get into jail in South American ports. And several men were sick aboard, too weak to work; he could use two good hands.

He went about his shore business, taking no end of chaffing from the consul and others. Stormalong Rankin had done a lot of bragging upon unexpectedly finding himself ahead of the *Porpoise* after all; and news of the sail-steam race was everywhere. Upon learning from a consul that the *Rainbow*, a Canton-bound clipper, had actually been here and gone a few days since, Lund arranged for the release of the two seamen in question, conditional on his getting them out of Valparaiso at once.

He went to the *carcel* and was admitted by a surly police official. In the patio of the jail he halted to await his men. They were in plain sight. At the far end of the rectangular jail yard was a medieval treadmill. Working this full steam, pumping water for the day's use, were a score of seamen.

The officer rapped out an order and the mill stopped turning. Twenty ragged, emaciated, woebegone seamen of all colors and nationalities stared hopefully; two names were called; and two men, bearded and unkempt, stepped down from the torture-wheel. Another order, and the others resumed their weary journey to nowhere.

The two half-starved figures stumbled forward with wild words of rejoicing. Lund broke in upon them gruffly.

"Get your gear, if you have any, and report aboard the *Porpoise*. Never mind any thanks. Get going."

It was evening before he came aboard himself, and spoke with the mate.

"Did those two rascals come aboard?"

"Aye, sir. Reg'lar packet-rats and no mistake. Scum, but they work willing."

"Give 'em slops and put 'em at easy work. When they get some meat on their bones, turn 'em over to the engineer; he needs some more help in the stokehole."

The two were fed and clothed from the slop-chest and set to work. They worked with pathetic eagerness; and presently Captain Lund forgot the whole matter.

NOW, heading north, he drove the *Porpoise* for all she was worth. Next port of call was Acapulco, the galleon port of Manila ships. Ten days behind, there; he was gaining a bit, better than he had expected.

Off again in record time, every man aboard throwing himself into the work with vim and energy. On across the Pacific, with the northeast trades blowing them toward the Sandwich Islands. Not until Honolulu, which although not the capital of the islands was the harbor most frequented by ships, would they know how far behind they were.

THE morning they stood in past Diamond Head, Lund was nervously pacing the deck; and the crew was on high tension. And there, slap before them, was the *Naiad* at anchor. One almost incredulous look, a yell from the man aloft, and then wild cheers burst from the whole ship. Lund flushed happily, exultation in his heart. Caught her, by the Eternal! But the strain had told on him, and he was weary of it.

Ashore, the two skippers met, shook hands, laughed together.

"What happened to you?" inquired Lund. "You led me handsomely at Valparaiso."

Stormalong, who was immaculately tricked out in his best shore rig, grimaced but seemed not at all cast down.

"Head-winds, where the trades should have been, for one thing," he rejoined philosophically. "A touch of bad luck, that's all. I haven't begun to fight yet, Cap'n. The pull will come from here on to Chefoo."

Lund nodded.

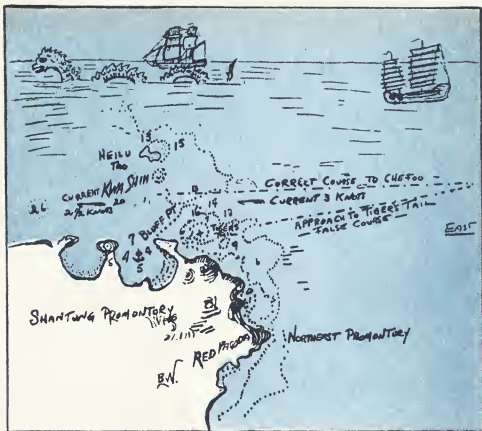
"If you want it so, yes. But it's my race. Say the word, and we'll call off the bets. I've proved my points; my ship's got the heels of you; and when we strike the China sea it'll be typhoon season. Say the word, and the race is off."

Rankin's face darkened ominously under a rush of blood.

"Whining, are you?" he rapped out. "Trying to crawl out of it, you dog! Not much; save your fine words for the owners. I'll beat you and your misbegotten iron pot to Chefoo, and you'll pay through the nail. Good-by, and bad luck to you!"

He swung off and away, leaving Lund astounded by this revelation of snarling hostility. Until this moment, he had never regarded Stormalong as an actual enemy; he had never thought Stormalong so regarded him. He had not viewed the race, indeed, in any light of personal vindictiveness. But now his eyes were open.

He went back to the ship with a blaze in his heart and a blaze in his face and summoned the mate, an angular Yankee



with a reputation as tough as his hard-bitten features.

"Push everything," he said savagely. "No shore leave!"

"Aye?" said the mate in sour surprise. "By rights we'd be here a week at the least, with the gear to overhaul—"

"You heard me, Mister!" snapped Lund. "When does the *Naiad* pull out?"

"Day after tomorrow, I hear."

"Then we sail the morning after she does. See to it."

AS ordered, so done. The men grumbled, cursed; but the driving mate got his overhaul done, preparing for the long beat to the China coast. Lund himself inspected the hatches and holds where the coal and the cargo for Chefoo and Shanghai was stowed; the possibility of fire by spontaneous combustion was always a specter to dread. All was well; the hatches were battened, and the *Porpoise* put to sea one day behind Rankin in the *Naiad*.

And now it was drive with a vengeance, and a thousand leagues passing under the forefoot—with never a sign of the towering windjammer. Outwardly calm, Lund paced the quarterdeck with uneasy

heart. The weather was too steady altogether. If Rankin were bowling along day after day with all canvas drawing, he would walk away with the race. Yet this was unlikely: some days were fast; some were slow; some would be sheer exasperation of light shifting winds, if the average held true. But to the slower *Porpoise* the long run should mean victory, with the paddles to churn where the wind failed, as now and then it did.

The long leagues slid away with the passing days. And then suddenly, unexpectedly, as Lund and the mate were coming up to take noon sights, with the dangerous Chusan archipelago ahead, a cry droned down from the man aloft:

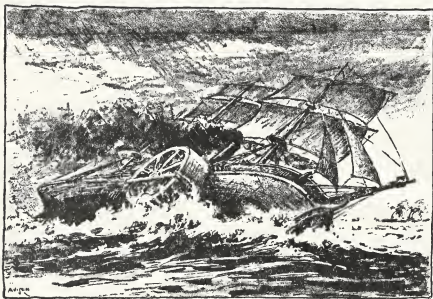
"Sa-a-il ho! Sail ho! A point off the starboard bow!"

Lund seized his glass and leaped for the mizzen shrouds. From aloft, came an excited yell, even before he was sure of the white dot breaking the horizon.

"It's her! It's her!"

The *Naiad* it was, with the wind failing to light, baffling airs; and Lund's heart hammered to the cheers of the men.

But the wind picked up, and the tall clipper clung like a leech now, sometimes hull down, sometimes with her



courses rising, sometimes out of sight but ever forging into view again. It was going to be a finish fight; this was certain. And then, hauling up for the northeast promontory of Shantung,—the finish almost in view,—came the final gamble.

SINCE early morning a half-gale had been blowing. Lund, impelled to caution in these waters, furling everything but jibs and upper topsails. About meridian the *Naiaid* began to walk up; with every stitch of canvas belling taut, she drew up and passed the *Porpoise* at a good fifteen-knot clip. Lund nodded to the pleading look of the Yankee mate, and the lower topsails were spread; but Stormalong was in the lead now.

Thus, with night and the gale blowing up fresher, they drove in upon the fabled Wohushih, a snarling stretch of rocks and reefs lying off the promontory and stretching far out. The Tiger's Tail, it was called in general. Tiger's Tail Rock itself lay eight hundred yards off the head of the promontory; since it was awash at low water and clearly visible in a heavy sea, he had no misgivings. Junks beating up the coast for Chefoo and beyond never used the treacherous inside passage, for evil spirits dwelt there, and no sane seaman would tread upon the Tiger's Tail, as the proverb had it. A proverb as old as China itself, and this name was probably as ancient too. Evil mists and sudden, unexplainable fogs imperiled all this place, and many a good ship's bones had been picked by the slaving fangs of the Tiger Rocks.

Stormalong Rankin bore straight on, and Lund grimly followed. There were no lights in those days, warding every

headland and reef and danger-point on the coast; no warnings at all, but Rankin knew the passage, and so did Lund.

His last fix had shown him he should pass safely to the south of Heilu Tao and Kwa Shih, another nest of reefs and shoals stretching northwestward beyond the Tiger's Tail.

"Are ye going to chance it?" asked the mate, as Lund came from looking at the compass. "A tricky place, with false channels and overfalls and God knows what!"

Lund stopped before the wheel and stared straight ahead. The moon had risen, a pale disk affording just enough light to see surf breaking over a reef.

"Aye," he said. "If Stormalong gets through, we can. It'll save hours of sailing. It means winning or losing."

The mate muttered and went forward. Lund resumed pacing, now and again halting to take a bearing on the black bulk of the promontory looming off to port. At regular intervals the masthead lookout reported the position of the *Naiaid*, and Lund altered course to keep in her track. Northeast Promontory appeared a little closer than it should be; but if Rankin could risk being set in close, so could he.

"What are ye getting for'ard?" sang out Lund to the leadsman, who had been taking a breather in the chains. The man took a cast, and cried out:

"Quarter less three, sir, and shoaling fast!"

Lund sprang to the bell-cord that signaled the engines, and jerked it. The paddles ceased slapping; straining forward, Lund stood listening intently. He knew the locality, knew the chart by

heart, and was sure he could peg his position within a few hundred yards.

This, at sea, is plenty of room, but can mean tragedy in narrow waters. Lund turned and leaped suddenly for the chart-room. The devil! He had forgotten—

At the chart locker, he groped blindly. Struck a match, looked, groped again. No sign of it. The tack was gone; the deviation-card was gone! With one wild oath, Lund darted for the deck again. The mate had set the course here—

"Mister! Ah, here you are!" he broke out, as the gangling figure loomed. "When you set this course did you check by the deviation-card?"

"No! The card was plumb gone—I thought you had it."

Then came the lookout's stunning cry:

"Breakers ahead! Breakers!"

"All hands, Mister."

The moment bulked long; an eternity. Lund realized that he had been led into a trap. Off somewhere to starboard in the mist sounded the slatting of canvas, the clattering of yards and blocks, the unmistakable thunder of backed topsails, hoarse orders to let go both anchors, and the heavy splashes as they fell.

Lund cursed hotly, striving to keep panic from his voice, lifted a shout at the mate, who was getting the anchors cleared forward.

"Let go both anchors when you're ready! Bear a hand!"

Getting out those heavy hooks was no simple task. The men labored mightily, but there was scant time. Lund gritted his teeth. Stormalong had rigged his anchors out long ago—had schemed all this!

All in a moment, a long, long moment; the gale was high, but the mists were thinning in the wind. Suddenly off to starboard loomed a small, flat-topped island. Lund choked on the recognition. They were inside Heilu Tao, a mile north of Bluff Point—actually treading on the Tiger's Tail!

WORRIED, incredulous and puzzled, Lund glanced into the binnacle. Then the dreaded cry from both mast-head and the mate on the fo'c'sle head:

"Breakers ahead and on the port bow!"

It all cleared, windy sea and brain together, at the tag end of that frightful moment. The mists vanished. There was the *Naiad*, long bowsprit pointed in the opposite direction, heading into the wind, breasting the tide and overfalls with both anchor-cables taut as bars.

Trap or not, Stormalong had come within a hair's-breadth of putting his own ship on the rocks, for the tide raced at full flood.

Lund, aware of his ship being pushed relentlessly, went forward on the jump. He had clear vision now; one glance from the knighthead, and he swung around.

"Belay the anchors but stand by," he ordered the mate, and lifted his speaking trumpet at the second officer, aft.

"Hard up the helm! Port—hard over!"

HERE, providentially, was a channel opening—a close shave, but it could be done. He ordered full speed, the paddles began thrashing; to his horror, the *Naiad* was blotted out again as the mist came swirling down. He raced aft.

The *Porpoise*, her stack emitting black streamers of smoke that were whipped to ribbons in the wind, thrashed into the narrow gut. She made it, with only feet to spare; the mist whirled thick and thicker. Then a wild cry from the mate.

"Breakers ahead and on the starboard bow!"

The ship was flying with wind and sea dead astern. There was no sea-room to go about. Astern, the surf thundered.

"Full speed astern! Let go both anchors!" roared Lund, and groaned to himself.

A booming swell rolled up and lifted the vessel like a chip. She struck, she staggered; even the roar of surf was drowned by the grinding of the reef against her iron bottom. Another swell—the screech of scraping iron sounded anew. Then she was floating, listless, all way stopped. The anchors plunged down.

The second mate, the hands who had been working sail and tending yards, left the rigging and gathered in a mute group on the halfdeck. The mate came aft. Lund was calm now, despite the cold sweat on his forehead.

"Furl all sail," he ordered. "Where's Chips? Sound the well. Unlimber the pumps."

He waited, watching the drift of mist all around, until the carpenter came with his soundings.

"Wells are dry, sir!"

Lund, with one deep breath, relaxed.

"Your watch, Mister," he said to the mate. "That double bottom may have weight, but it's proved its worth once more. Wake me up at any alarm."

He went below. Nothing to do now until daylight, when he could determine

how completely he was trapped. He could not understand it. His bearings were all off—the mist had ruined his perception, and loss of the deviation-card when it was most needed had put the skids under him completely. To remember the deviations offhand was impossible. He searched the chart locker again, searched everywhere, and found no card. Weary and dismal of heart, he turned in to await daylight.

Morning showed the ship lying among rocks, anchored and riding safely; but one look at the gut through which he had come, and Lund swallowed hard. It was incredible that he should have made that narrow passage in safety. By daylight, he never would have attempted it; last night, he had thought he was on a clear course. There was no clear course at all, in sight. Northward, the surf broke over a curving reef that completely cut him off from the open sea beyond.

AROUND the end of the Tiger's Tail the *Naiad* was ratching by means of kedges. Lund watched her, too thankful that his ship was saved, to think about losing the game. Then he turned his glass to the reef on the north side, and examined it with attention. The tide was coming in heavily. He knew where he was, now; he knew every depth of water, even the depth over that reef. If he went at it, the double bottom would be torn clean out of his ship—and he had almost gone at it last night.

"Nothing to do," he said to the mate, "except to work back through the gut and take the long way around. You haven't found that deviation-card?"

The mate worked his lean jaws on a twist of tobacco.

"Well," he said, "I've got my suspicions, and they aint nice. If you was to tell me to foller my own nose—"

"Run 'em down, Mister." Lund gave him a sharp glance. "If you think there was anything— Hello! What's Stormalong up to?"

His attention was suddenly diverted. Under light, uneven airs the *Naiad* had worked around the island and the reef, but instead of bearing up for Chefoo, had rounded up and was dropping her longboat. Cap'n Rankin, resplendent in blue broadcloth and glossy high-topped beaver, descended into the boat and headed her in among the reef channels.

Lund watched the boat pull in. Presently Stormalong waved his hand, hailed them in greeting, and came in under the

side. He clambered up to the deck, and stood looking around, saturnine, darkly handsome, powerful. The Yankee mate, who should have met him at the rail, had vanished completely. He strode aft to Lund, and with a grin shook hands.

"Well, well, Cap'n! You'll have a few days to study the Tiger's Tail, looks like. Maybe you can win back through the gut when the spring rise starts—it comes to seven and a half feet hereabouts. I thought I'd relieve you of the mails and anything else you might have to jettison to lighten ship."

Lund merely laughed slightly.

"Last time we met, Stormalong, I offered to cry quits on the wager. Now I'll offer to double it. Yes or no?"

Rankin shook his head, smiling shrewdly. "Tall talk, tall talk!" he said. "I suppose you'll be sailing right out?"

"Within the hour," said Lund. "And in Chefoo ahead of you."

"Right out, against the wind, eh?" Stormalong chuckled. "Paddles won't do it, Cap'n. You're too low in the water."

"Might be, if you were master," said Lund slowly. "That's the difference between us, Cap'n. Hello!"

The two men swung around. The Yankee mate was coming on the run. He was breathing hard, his eye was alight, and his skinned knuckles were bleeding. He paused to clutch the man Avery from amid a group of watching seamen, and shoved him aft.

Stormalong Rankin stiffened a little.

"I GOT it!" panted the mate, bringing Avery to a halt.

Lund's brows lifted.

"What's the meaning of this, Mister? What have you got?"

"A confession out o' that blighter Sam Peak, what come aboard at Valparaiso! And here's the other blighter. —You, Avery! Hand over that deviation-card! Quick, you dog, or I'll put you in the sickbay!"

Avery shrank suddenly, white with panic. The angry mate reached for him, but with a subdued squawk, he produced the missing deviation-card.

"I found it, sir,"—and he shoved it at Lund. "I found it laying—"

"You lie!" roared the mate. "Cap'n Rankin give you money to lay for us and come aboard and rob us in a pinch! Sam Peak told the whole thing! Git! Down into Cap'n Rankin's boat or I'll take a rope to you!"

Lund fingered the card.

"Well, well! Mighty queer," he said affably, "how things do come out—"

"What d'ye mean?" rapped out Stormalong suddenly. "I warn you, pay no attention to this outrageous lie! Don't dare accuse me of trying to wreck your ship. Tell that to a Board of Inspectors back home, and they'll snatch your ticket!"

Cap'n Tommy Lund smiled.

"I'm not telling anyone anything, Cap'n Rankin," he answered cheerfully. "You're a fine, clever, upstanding man, and many's the time, aboard your ship, I've wished for this day to come."

"What d'ye mean?" demanded Rankin truculently.

"Why, just this!" said Lund, and smacked his fist into the dark face.

Tommy Lund knew better than to bother hitting for the face if he meant to kill, but he just could not help it. Next instant, he regretted his mistake.

His regret did not last longer than it takes to get a black eye and a split lip, for he rallied and tore into Stormalong with both fists, while the yelling men formed a delighted roaring circle. True, Lund drew another black eye to match the first, but that was nothing at all to what Stormalong Rankin drew—absolutely nothing at all.

TEN minutes later, beaver gone, blue coat in shreds, and a blob of gore where his handsome face had been, the sorry remains of Stormalong were handed down into his waiting boat, where his two jackals now crouched.

"A pleasant riddance to the lot of you," sang out Lund from the rail. "Douse some water over your skipper and tell him to watch our smoke. Engineer! Steam up?"

"Aye, sir," said the joyful engineer.

"Get below and give us a full head. Mister Mate! Get in them anchors—all hands to stations! Make sail!"

One and all thought for certain that Tommy Lund had gone stark raving mad, but they yelped and obeyed him, swarming aloft. Steam or not, Cap'n Lund had never neglected sail drill; and together, precisely, the topsails were shaken out, then the t'gallants and the courses. Navy style, and a sight to see!

Smoke poured from the stack of the *Porpoise*, for she had kept up full steam. The anchors were cat-headed, her canvas filled away, and with her twin paddles

churning like mad, she presented her broad quarter to the breeze. Like mad, aye; Lund was at the helm, and a madman they all knew him.

For, with every stitch of canvas spread and the engines boiling, the *Porpoise* was heading slap for the reef across the bight.

"God help us!" said the mate, looking at Lund with stricken eyes. "There's not above twelve feet o' water yonder, and it's steep to both sides!"

"That's what I figure," said Lund, eyes bright on the reef. His voice blared, and the mate sprang to obey.

MEN leaped to tacks and sheets and braces, and the yards were sharply braced. The port, or lee, braces were hauled flat aft and bowed taut. Then, at the very risk of taking the sticks out of her, Lund put his helm hard up, with the reef almost under her forefoot and men braced against the shock.

With the wind almost dead on the starboard beam, the pressure of wind was suddenly so tremendous that the *Porpoise* either had to spill her sails, carry them away, or lay over on her beam ends with shattered masts. But the straining rig and canvas held under the thrust of wind; the ship canted over on her side, with the weather paddles stopped, the lee paddles wildly thrashing the water.

And thus, drawing on her beam ends not half the water she would when on an even keel, the despised hybrid eased across the reef with feet to spare.

Shrill yelps of incredulity, then cheers of wild amazed delight, burst from the crew. Lund, battered but grinning, left the wheel and was caught in the rush and hug of the Yankee mate.

"You did it, you did it, sir! By the horns o' Moses, you did it!"

"Just the old pilot-boat trick, Mister," said Lund, still grinning. "What one can do, another can try. By the way, you and I will have a bit of a celebration in Chefoo. I'm not forgetting that I owe you something."

He went to the companionway and there paused, to look back across the water at the *Naiad*, and the boat pulling for her through the reef-passages, and the soggy unkempt figure in the stern-sheets. Cap'n Lund waved his hand.

"Smart fellow, Stormalong!" he muttered—and with a twinkle in his blackened eye, he headed below.

"The Yellow Ship," a specially dramatic story in this highly interesting series, will appear in the forthcoming August issue.

A Million for



The eighth exciting episode in the hectic career of a young man who undertook to make a million dollars in twelve months by means of "Personal Mystery."

By FULTON T. GRANT

The Story So Far:

"**T**HE secret of worldly success," said the wealthy manufacturer Ephraim Brood to Bentley Dewert, "lies in the exercise of what I call Personal Mystery. If you've read 'The Count of Monte Cristo,' you've seen it work. Personal mystery made the sailor *Edmond Dantes* over into the magnificent *Monte Cristo*. Let people *imagine* things about him. Didn't talk about himself. Lawrence of Arabia was another: an able and daring officer, yes; but personal mystery made him a world figure."

"Very interesting, Mr. Brood," said Dewert—who had been fired from his newspaper job and was hunting for another. "But—well, just how does it concern me?"

"Ever hear of a ghost-writer?" Brood demanded. "Well, you're going to be a ghost-actor. I'm going to write a book. Going to give my formula to the world. Need a stooge—somebody to *live* that book. While I write it! That's your job. You'll make a million dollars. Want the job?"

Dewert accepted the fantastic offer. With the five hundred dollars capital Brood provided, he bought new clothes, put up at the fashionable Washington Towers—and bribed the clerk *not* to let another guest, a French airplane-buyer,

know that he, John Destiny (that was the stage name he had chosen) was in residence. The hotel-clerk promptly tipped off the newspaper men—and before the dust settled, a certain airplane-manufacturer had paid Mr. Destiny six thousand dollars to keep away from the airplane buyer.

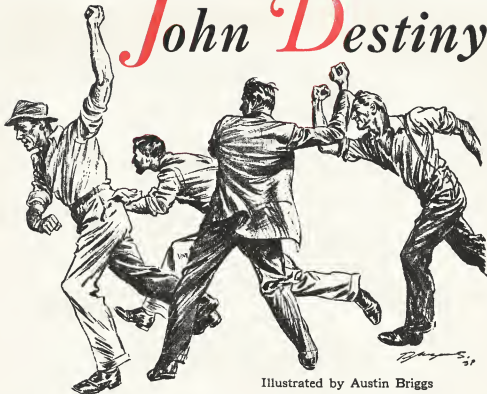
Personal mystery worked even in hard-boiled Wall Street too. As John Destiny, he set up an office near by; and seizing his opportunity, got himself so much talked about as a mysterious new operator (presumably a "front" for well-known and powerful interests), that the all-too-clever and none-too-scrupulous broker Ryster paid him ten thousand dollars for an option on his "holdings" of a certain stock—which in reality amounted to just one hundred shares.

In another quarter, however, Dewert ran into trouble. One night he was greatly taken by a pretty girl dining with an old gentleman in the Towers restaurant, and was wondering what sort of personal mystery he could employ to make her acquaintance, when the old fellow choked on a fishbone and collapsed. Bentley took them to his rooms, called a doctor, and politely left them alone. When he returned, they had gone, leaving no word.

The newspapers soon supplied the answer: Lorraine Graymaster had aided her

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John Destiny



Illustrated by Austin Briggs

wealthy aged uncle to escape from the asylum in which, she believed, he had been unjustly confined; and the two had disappeared.

They got in touch with Dewert again, however; and he learned that Graymaster's supposed insanity was based on his knowledge of a certain paralyzing light-ray which would be of the utmost value in war. Bentley was able to save Graymaster from a gang of foreign conspirators determined to get possession of the old man's secret, but was himself captured by them. . . . *Personal Mystery*—and plenty of nerve—worked again, however: Dewert came out of the fracas with a whole skin and a check for fifty thousand dollars; but he knew the excitement had just begun.

And now a not-so-crazy inventor mistook the *P(ersonal) M(ystery)* lettering on Dewert's office door to mean *Promotion Management*, and brought him a weird gadget designed to reduce the expense for fuel in power-production. And when the cards were played, an all-too-suspicious holding-company management had paid the inventor and his promotion associate half a million dollars to keep the already outmoded gadget from cutting into their business.

Shortly afterward Bentley Dewert was summoned to conference with Senator

Pinkton, the mineral-water magnate. For Dewert's fame had spread; and the old Senator needed a wizard to pep up the falling sales of Pinkwater. So it happened that Dewert was given complete control of the Pinkton plant for one month. Naturally, the executives he displaced were rebellious—to the extent that they stirred up disaffection among the workmen. And when Dewert (taking advantage of a slight change in the chemical composition of Pinkwater caused by harmless seepage into the springs) published advertisements in all the papers warning buyers that a new element in Pinkwater *might* have a stimulating effect, the men were certain the business was ruined and their jobs gone. A riot outside Dewert's office followed—though meanwhile Senator Pinkton had phoned from Washington that the advertisement had been a great success and buyers were besieging the stores. (*The story continues in detail:*)

CRASH! A stone had come through the window. Another crash, another stone. A fusillade of heavy pebbles and bits of driveway gravel scattered across Bentley's desk. A fusillade of heavy words, laden with mob fury, poured in upon the ears of the two young men.

"Nice people," Burrow commented. "And now, miracle man, what next?"

Bentley's voice was troubled.

"I've got to get out of here. I've got a date—in New York."

Burrow listened to the wolves outside.

"Maybe," he said ironically, "if I talked to them and told them you had a date, it would appeal to their sense of chivalry."

Bentley's laugh was sour.

Burrow stood up. "Wait a minute, feller, there's just a chance. I'll be back."

He darted out of the door.

"HEY, hold on—" Bentley called after him; but Burrow had vanished through a door to the stenographic room diagonally across the hall. Presently he returned.

"Want to take a chance?" he asked.

"If you can run fast enough, maybe you can make it. That mob is out back in the plant grounds. I don't see anybody by the front side. There's a window from the big room across the way that gives on the lawn. There's just a chance we can slip through and get a head start before they spot us. Are you on?"

Bentley nodded. "I've got a date," he persisted.

Burrow was out of the door. Bentley followed him. They ran across the hall. Just as Bentley hurried upon the heels of the young chemist, a door opened down the hallway and a man stepped out.

"Destiny!" he called. "Destiny—wait, I say, wait! The Senator says—"

It sounded like Tom Leris' voice, but Bentley was not having any. That would be a trap, a trick. Leris hated him.

The window at the far end of the stenographic room was large and modern. Burrow had it open and was shouting:

"Let's go, feller. See if you can do fifty yards in nothing flat."

Then they were out of the window and tearing across the lawn. Traces of snow lay about. Patches of ice impeded their running. A voice behind was yelling:

"Hey, stop them, somebody! In front, in front!"

A mob appeared as from nowhere.

A heavy stone struck Bentley's shoulder a glancing blow. Burrow slipped on an ice spot, went down swearing. Bentley stopped dead and lifted him.

"To hell with me—you got a date." That was Burrow.

Bentley ignored him. Somehow, with a strength that was new to him, born of excitement and stress, he managed to lift Burrow to his feet.

"My damn' ankle—" Burrow began.

A stone smote his thigh. The shouting was growing nearer.

But somehow, limping and running despite his pain, Burrow was running again. Bentley was beside him. The mob was behind.

Then, the fence. It was a high steel-wire fence, constructed so that humans and animals might not, with ease, climb over it.

Stone rang against the steel wires. Shouts gave voice behind them. The thud of feet was nearing. Some one, faster than the others, was almost there. Bentley grappled with the steel mesh of the fence, his fingers tearing at it, his toes slipping, catching, slipping and always fighting for purchase. Burrow's ankle impeded him, but his courage was constant.

"You'll make it, big boy," he was encouraging. Up and up and up. One foot was on the steel band that divides the fence. Reaching fingers were groping for a hold on his legs.

Then a stone struck him. It was like an impersonal thing, like slow-motion, like something remote and far away. He felt it strike. But he seemed to see his hands loose their hold. He saw himself fall back. He saw the fury in those faces around him. Dazed and bleeding and hurt, he still clung to consciousness. A fist hit him. A name was called. A hand gripped him. He whirled and flung some one off. Darkness was trying to cover him. He lashed out with his right, giving it body power. His fist struck something soft and yielding. He struck again and again. Shouts and grunts were mixed.

And then the back of his head exploded.

Darkness.

IT was the bed, first of all, that penetrated into Bentley's consciousness. He did not remember a bed. Beds had not been part of the picture at all. Beds were all right, in their place, but how would a bed come under him in the Pink-ton yard, while those crazy men were charging—

Then the rest of it came through: White room, white walls, white women in white caps, and little white beds all about. That was a puzzler at first. But when he twisted a little and the pains shot through his side, and a knife seemed to be stabbing his head, and his arm was locked tight in something heavy, he guessed the rest of it. Hospital, of course.

Now why would he be in a hospital again? Then he remembered the fight. Good, feeling the crunch of his fist against flesh. Bad, seeing Jim Burrow limping with a hurt ankle, hands grabbing at him, sounds of yelling and shouting.

A cold, impersonal voice near him somewhere said:

"Aha! Decided to come around, have you now? You're a tough one, I'll be bound."

The nurse, of course. She peered down at him, curiously, interestedly, but with detachment, looking a little like a quiz-zical old parrot.

"Am I—bad?" Those weren't the words he wanted, but the idea was in it.

She smiled mechanically. "You'll do well enough," she said. "A slight concussion. Be still, now, and let me get your temperature. Open your mouth. There! Remember, it's glass, not candy."

After that there was a long blank. Sleep is a nurse without a white cap and thermometer. When he awoke again, he knew it was already night, for the lights were burning. He had a vague consciousness of not being alone, of people near.

"Dear me," said a voice near by. "Dear me, he's waking up at last. Well, well, Mr. Destiny!"

LERIS' voice. Leris, being tentative and anxious and having a faint trace of embarrassment in his tone. Bentley looked up around the corner of a sheet. It was Leris, right enough. A slim fellow in white stood near him. A doctor, probably. And sitting on a bed opposite was a man with a completely bandaged head, out of which red hair tufted like a bunch of carrots.

A smile cracked the corners of Bentley's mouth.

"Ah, Doctor Livingston, I presume," he said to the bandaged head. "Fancy seeing you here!"

Burrow's voice came out of the bandage.

"Howdy, feller," he said. "You look terrible—how do you feel?"

"Like the man who fell into the buzz-saw," Bentley said. "Was I in a fight or something? And you too—or do you wear that head-dress for fun?"

"It was a most unfortunate misunderstanding, Mr. Destiny—" That was Leris, not Burrow. "Most unfortunate, indeed. I—ah—I am heartily sorry. In fact I—"

"Hello, Leris. Well, you had your day, I guess."

Leris was squirming visibly.

"It was a most regrettable thing, sir. The men—out of hand. . . . Senator—telephone—quite amazing, really."

Babble, babble, babble. . . . Bentley wished people like Leris wouldn't be so damnably bright and babblesome.

But Leris was pushing something into one of Bentley's hands, something that crackled like paper. He strained to raise his head. His torn muscles gave him a twinge of agony. The doctor bustled to his bedside and lifted his shoulders a little.

"Sorry sir," he said brusquely. "I'm afraid this is no time to prolong a conversation. This man is still quite ill. I must insist—"

But Bentley had the paper open now and he could just focus his eyes on it. Familiar shape, somehow. Long and thin and blue, like a check. It was a check. Why a check? Why were they all so silent and queer? Then he made out the writing. It read quite plainly in Leris' neat script:

"Pay to the order of John J. Destiny. . . . One hundred fifty-six thousand dollars (\$156,000)." And it was signed by Tom Leris himself, countersigned by Senator Pinkton.

It took seconds which seemed like years to grasp it. Then, when it came through, Bentley managed to say:

"Hey, what the— Now, just why is this, Leris? Is it a gag?"

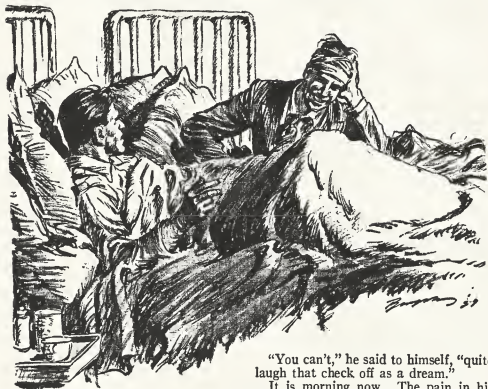
"Indeed not, Mr. Destiny. We all owe you a deep apology, sir. I tried my best to turn the men away from you, but they were—ah—excited. The Senator telephoned from Washington, and ordered me to give you this check. I confess, I was greatly astonished. But it seems that your—ah—advertising scheme—has been remarkably successful. Already dealers' orders are pouring in by telegram. I am not at all in sympathy with your ah—trick; but I must admit it is producing business. Amazing, sir. Amazing indeed. And now I have a contract here—"

JUST a minute, Leris." Bentley struggled to sit up. This was getting too deep, too queer. "Are you trying to tell me that the Senator saw that ad, that my X-element gag is really working? That the Senator is handing me—"

"You're catching on, feller." This was the bandaged Burrow. There was irony in his voice, and even Leris must have felt it. "It looks as if yesterday"

you were just a slob, and today you're a hero. I wish I could say, 'I told you so,' but I can't. Anyhow, that fool gag of yours is piling them in, and the Senator is handing you a bonus. I got a raise."

"We were not quite up to your—ah—psychological methods, Mr. Destiny,"



Leris was saying. "The men of the plant—"

"Yeah, the men of the plant!" Burrow caught him up. "They didn't like you yesterday—not even a little bit. But all is forgiven, and you can come home to Little Nell—"

"And I am commissioned to offer you a contract, sir," Leris was saying.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, this is certainly not the time nor place—" That was the doctor protesting.

And suddenly Bentley resented them all. It was too fast, too sudden. His head hurt, and his side hurt, and he hurt all over, and it was hard to focus.

"Go away," he said. "Please go away—all of you. . . . Can't grasp all of it—at once. . . . Go away."

And then the nurse's flat voice saying: "Will you leave the lad alone, now? Come on, gentlemen, for the love of common sense—"

And the gray mists shut down again.

The only way Bentley knew it had not been a dream was that the check still lay there on the little table by his bed. There it was,—long and pale blue and almost insignificant, except for the "*hundred fifty-six thousand dollars*" on it,—weighted down by a little bottle.

"You can't," he said to himself, "quite laugh that check off as a dream."

It is morning now. The pain in his head is mostly gone. So is his fever. His muscles are still throbbing a little. A twisting knife is still cutting into his side, and his whole body is vibrating cruelly with it. But his arms are stronger, and by making an effort, he can push himself into a half-sitting position.

"Oof!" he said aloud. "A hundred and fifty thousand Personally Mysterious dollars—and a busted head, in a hospital. Well, Dr. Brood, there are a lot of angles about this game you didn't mention. Fancy Mrs. Dewert's little boy in a hospital—twice in two weeks, too!"

Which brought him, of course, back to his last hospitalization in New York. And which, in turn, brought his thoughts to things remote but full of concern.

"I wonder," he wondered, "what Hartswell really did about my wire about Lorraine. My God, they might have killed that poor girl. . . . Damn them—damn them! If I could only—"

He left that wish hanging. What he meant, inwardly, was if he could only do



"Ah, Dr. Livingston, I presume," Bentley said to the bandaged head. "Fancy meeting you here!"

something about it. "Do" is one of those terrific little words. It implies movement, action. You can't get much action out of a hospital bed. You can't *do* much about a bunch of thugs who are a thousand miles away. You can't *do* much about a lovely girl named Lorraine when you don't know if she's dead or alive.

"Damn Hartswell!" he said fervently. "I didn't think that old goat would let me down."

But his wire to Hartswell was two whole days old now, and it looked as though the city editor of the *Chronicle* had done just that: let him down.

"Nurse! Hey, nurse!" It hurt him to call out. The dangling knob of a bell-wire hung behind his head from the bedstead, and he pushed it viciously. Presently a nurse appeared.

"Good morning," she said brightly.

Bentley broke in with: "I want a lot of New York newspapers—in a hurry."

"I don't know if the doctor will want you to—"

"Never mind the doctor; I know what I want. I'm the one that's hurt, and I'm all right enough to read. Tell the doctor I made a scene or something."

She was young, this nurse. She wanted to do the right thing. She was full of indecision. But Bentley repeated his demand so forcefully that she fled, and presently she came back with a sheaf of newspapers.

"I—I borrowed these from Dr. Kerning's office," she said with some embarrassment. "They just came this morning. They're yesterday's papers."

Bentley disregarded the girl and snatched the papers. It hurt to sit up, but he had forgotten that. Both the *Ledger* and the *Advisor* were blazing headlines anent the Spanish civil war and the imminent fall of Madrid on their front pages. There was little or no room for items of a social or merely human-interest nature.

"No *Chronicle*?" he demanded. "I want the *Chronicle*."

"Sorry, sir. Dr. Kerning doesn't read it, and I will have to order it from town."

Bentley grumbled. Turning the pages, he scarcely knew what, precisely, he was looking for. Why, after all, should there be anything in the *Ledger* or the *Advisor*? Not likely they would know anything, unless—unless—

THE line that caught him was: GIRL'S BODY FOUND NEAR SCARSDALE.

Good God!

Then he grinned at his own excitement.

"I'm pretty well hit," he mused. "I guess I can't worm out of the facts now. Maybe I'd better—"

No, it was not Lorraine Graymaster's body. Some other girl. A poor girl. Poor and brunette and probably somebody's maid. Nothing very astonishing about a body being found nowadays. They're

practically strewn all over the place, if you read the newspapers. But he had had a bad moment with that headline. Queer how your mind will trick you into things.

FOOTSTEPS coming down the corridor outside; then the glass door opening and the parrot-faced head nurse coming in, her Irish lurking in the purr of her voice:

"Reading the paypers, is it, this morning? And yesterday you was killed altogether? Well, I'll give you more to read, now that you can stand it."

"Stand it?"

"It's a telegram—a bit long getting here, maybe, what with it going to the Works first and all. But 'twas Mr. Leris that brought it last night. Here, take it, and watch out for a relapse." Then she paused, holding the sealed yellow envelope just beyond his reach: "Or maybe you'd much better wait. Telegrams is often bad news, lad." But she was fooling, and Bentley knew it.

"I'm all right. Let's have it, nurse."

She gave it to him with a great wink and waddled out.

This wire was addressed queerly, too, On the envelope it read,

*John Destiny, Pinkton
(address uncertain)*

Odd leadpencil marks suggested that the missive had been refused, diversely, at the local post office, the jail, a hotel, the Pinkton plant. Bentley tore the envelope, conscious of a sudden feeling of thrill and excitement.

"It's Hartswell at last," he told himself. "Got to be Hartswell. The old duck finally figured out that I was here some place. Could be Brood, of course, but—not likely."

But the message was from neither Hartswell nor yet Brood.

It read:

JOHN DESTINY ESQ PINKTON ONE GIRLS
OPINION IS THAT YOU COULD WALK UNDER
AN EARTHWORM WEARING A SILK HAT IF IT
WAS A VERY CONVEX EARTHWORM STOP
LOW IS THE WORD STOP NO DOUBT NEWS-
PAPERS PAY GOOD MONEY

And if this was amazing the signature was still more so. It was signed with one little name: LORRAINE.

If it can be said of a man wounded and supine in a hospital bed that he staggered and reeled, then Bentley did both. And reeling, he could not hear the opening of the ward's door, nor the firm, purposeful patter of Mr. Tom Leris' feet on

the floor. He heard not, and cared not if he heard. He was sick in body and sicker in mind. Factual things about him had no existence. Deep in his heart and soul he had received a knife, a slap, a rebuff. "Lorraine!" he murmured. "Great God! What in the—"

"Well, well, Mr. Destiny!" Leris was prattling. "Good to see you siting up and mending. Now I want to continue our business of yesterday. I am instructed by the Senator to offer you a contract. Why—what's the matter, young man?"

There was indeed something the matter. Bentley did not listen to Leris' voice. Instead, and in spite of considerable pain, he was slowly drawing his pajama-clad legs from under the bedclothes, every muscle torturing him. He was crumpling the telegram in his whitened fist. He was stiffly, painfully turning, like a robot man, and setting his feet gingerly but nevertheless positively upon the floor. He was standing up on legs which shook and hurt him, and walking with difficulty toward the little draped rack whereon his clothes were hung, his eyes fixed and focused upon things neither present nor, for that matter, known to any normal existence.

"I say, what's wrong, man?" Leris was moved and startled at the young man's behavior. "You can't do this. You aren't well enough to. Nurse! Nurse!"

The head nurse was entering. She heard and she saw. She saw a man brought in as an emergency case, and who had been running high temperatures for two days, out of his bed and in the act of putting on his clothes. She saw, and cried out as she ran:

"You get right back into that bed!"

But Bentley heard nothing of all this. It was only when a doctor, hastily summoned, and with the collaboration of the nurse and Mr. Leris, laid strong, practiced hands upon Bentley and literally dragged him back to his cot, that he became conscious of them. He did not struggle. His pain was too great for struggle. He let them carry him to the bed. He heard their remonstrances vaguely as from afar off. But he only said, very quietly and in a voice which they could hardly recognize:

"I'm leaving here. You can't stop me. You haven't the right. If you stop me, I'll sue this hospital for a million dollars. I'm going, that's all. I'm catching the next plane."

There is something faintly miraculous about how the human body is able, under stress, to function without a mind. Miracle or no, it can truthfully be said of Bentley that not once during those long, complex hours of his flight to New York, had his thinking mind bubbled up through the stratum of confusion which separated it from mere motor reactions and reflexes into a clear consciousness of what he was doing. Doubtless some mental corner was awake to dictate his movements—the packing of his suitcases, the wild motor ride to Springfield airport, the engaging of a plane passage, not forgetting to pocket the Pinkton check and to tuck it safely into his wallet. Yet as the hum and roar of the metropolis grew about him, toward five o'clock that evening, he had no clear memory of what had occurred.

There lingered, somehow, as though his ears retained fragments of sound, the piping voice of Mr. Tom Leris protesting about some kind of contract, of an indignant doctor, of Jim Burrow, head still bandaged, carrying his bags for him and getting him a car, of a delegation of Pinkton workers armed with some kind of apologetic document which they read at him as he ran. But this was pure phantasmagoria, and all belonged to another world of which he had little or no part.

For there was only one positive thought for him and that was emphatically expressed in the single proper noun—Lorraine.

"That's what it is," he had told himself ten thousand times. "She got away from Ross—that's pretty obvious, isn't it? And God knows I'm thankful for that. But she thinks I ran out on her. I've got to find her. I've simply got to. She can't think that—she *mustn't*. I—I can't let her. . . . I just *can't*!"

AT the Hotel Washington Towers the management was glad—and perhaps a little worried—to see the return of the ex-White Knight. Not that Bentley noticed, or even cared. Not even taking the trouble to unpack his things, he left the hotel, walking down Park Avenue in a kind of daze. No reason directed his steps. No clear analysis belonged to his thinking.

"Queer," he kept reflecting. "Mighty queer. I don't see how *she* could figure out that I was in Pinkton. And I don't see why she was so mad. I've got to find her—just got to."

But one does not, handily, discover a fair maid in a big city when that maid elects to hide herself, and when police and other professional aid is out of the question.

Leaving Park Avenue and striking westward, for no especial reason, his thoughts crept toward Hartswell of the *Chronicle*. Damn Hartswell, anyhow. If Hartswell had *done* something, maybe—well, maybe anything. But he had not. He had ignored Bentley's wire. He had let him down.

Stopping a cab, he went whirling off to the *Chronicle* Building and storming along the corridor of the editorial offices toward the city-room, blood in his eye. Damn Hartswell!

THE burly city editor, startled at first by the sudden apparition of this angry, shouting, accusing, wrought-up young man, listened for minutes to the damning. Even city editors have moments of calm patience. Then, presently, he had had enough.

"Shut up!" The big man reared out of his chair. The office, as a single man, drew a deep breath. Few if any had ventured to beard Hartswell to his face. Things were going to happen. "Shut up, you young fool, before I toss you out of the window. Shut up, Dewert."

Perforce, and possibly out of ancient habit, Bentley was silenced. Hartswell's voice softened just a little.

"So, you think I let you down, hey? I always thought you were pretty dumb, Dewert, but not *that* dumb. Come along with me. . . . No, shut up. I've had enough of your lip."

Bentley followed him into a little office adjoining the city-room, where, betimes, the busy city-editor retreated to concentrate on his tri-weekly column. Hartswell closed the door.

"Listen, kid," he said strangely. "Stop shouting a minute and let me tell you a couple. There's no reason for the whole office to hear this."

Bentley stared at him. What did the man mean?

"Now look, before you go yelling around that I didn't take your story tip, try reading the *Chronicle*. Here, take a look at yesterday's rag—look on page four."

He handed Bentley a paper, opening to the page named.

Bentley, still dazed, let his eyes run down the page. A caption blazed out and smote him.



"Oh—" he said, breathlessly. "Oh—
my God!"
This is what he read:

CLANDESTINE ROMANCE MAY LIE UNDER DEB'S DISAPPEARANCE

Graymaster Heiress Noted
For Unconventionalities

by
Annie Lessing

New York's Four Hundred is only mildly concerned over the rather mysterious disappearance of Lorraine Graymaster, beautiful but headstrong debutante of last season, from the Tuxedo home of Mrs. Doris Fermat whom she had been visiting since February 3. Miss Graymaster is no newcomer to newspaper headlines. Her thrill-seeking and adventurous nature has already made her a figure almost as unique as was that of her eccentric uncle, Dr. Buntsman Graymaster, some decades ago. . . .

Mrs. Fermat told your reporter that Miss Graymaster made a telephone call to a New York hotel at noon of February 10, and that she drove to this city in her own roadster shortly afterward without announcing her purpose. . . .

Mystery is added to the case by the fact that Miss Graymaster's car has been discovered in a parking-lot adjoining a New Jersey airport, uncalled for since that date, and the girl herself is reported to have been seen in the waiting-rooms of

"You gosh-awful fool!" Bentley cried. "When I told you to play up the society angle, I didn't mean to put *me* in that angle! This is crazy, Hartswell!"

the Transamerica Airways in mid-afternoon of that date. . . .

The suggestion of romance as an explanation comes from the discovery by your reporter of the fact that the Transamerica passenger lists reveal that one John Destiny, alias the "White Knight," recently a seven-day wonder in this city, was among the passengers in the Denver plane that afternoon. Miss Graymaster's name has already been coupled with that of this enigmatic young man, and although no direct conclusion may be drawn from this coincidence, it is considered likely that—

He could get no farther.

"You—you damned fool!" That was his statement anent J. C. Hartswell. "You gosh-awful fool! When I told you to play up the society angle, I didn't mean to put *me* in that angle! She didn't run

off with me. I haven't seen the girl in— in months. I told you I was going to break a hot story, and to keep the girl warm in the paper so you could get a jump on it. But this is crazy, Hartswell. This is downright libel. And as for Annie Lessing, she can't make up a cock-and-bull story like that and drag me into it—suggesting that Lor—that Miss Graymaster is—” He stopped. “I’ll tell you what, Hartswell: there *is* a big story behind this thing—really big, and not a social scandal, either. Why didn’t you just write—”

“Yeah,” said Hartswell coldly. “I’ll bet there is. I’ll bet there’s a big story.

didn’t hand me that tip out of the kindness of your heart. You wanted something. You had a reason. Maybe you’re sweet on the Graymaster frill—maybe that’s it. I wouldn’t know. But anyhow, I don’t trust you, Dewert. And until you lay your cards down, I’ll play mine the way I hold ‘em. Now if you don’t like that story the way Annie got it, you tell me a better one.”

Bentley stared at him. Grim, hard, mercilessly a newspaper man was Hartswell. You can’t often fool men like that.

“I—I can’t tell you any more, Hartswell,” he said, finally. “Not yet . . . Later.”



You’d be the first to know. And the first to tell me too, hey? You didn’t tip me off that you were the White Knight, Dewert. You let the *Ledger* scoop us on that. You just let me guess. You didn’t hand me a tip on that Wall Street deal, either. I could have used a yarn about Ryster. And what makes you think I’m gonna believe you’ve got anything we want in this Graymaster thing? . . . This is a pretty good paper, Dewert. We aren’t so very dumb. You

“Humph! Can’t, hey? Then maybe you won’t care if I print the rest of the story—the way I got it?”

“The rest? Is there more? What have you got, Hartswell? Is she—can’t you see, I— What good does it do to hold out on me? I can’t tell you anything—I can’t, Hartswell. I would if I could. Honestly, I would. But for God’s sake, what’s happened—to Miss Graymaster?”

Hartswell grinned. He was human, underneath his hardboiled front. And Bentley's nerves, worried and frayed under the pressure of days, would not serve to hide his concern behind any more pretended casualness.

"Kind of interested, Dewert? I got a hunch that you know this Graymaster jane a lot more than you let on. Well, there isn't really much more to it—not much that we can prove anyhow. I'll ease your mind for you. The girl did go down to the airport in her car. Bet you know all about that, because we did check the passenger lists, and John Destiny was a passenger."

HE paused. Bentley hung on his words. "But there was a little trouble after your plane took off, Dewert—"

"Trouble? What trouble?" Bentley still retained a vivid picture of what Leris had told him—Ross and that unidentified woman appearing, and Lorraine giving a little cry of fright.

"Well," Hartswell told him, "Annie got a story about a girl going off in a faint—right there by the runway where you go down to the flying-field. It seems a man and a woman picked her up and took care of her—took her off in a taxi. Of course, it might not be anything at all—only, Annie says that all the descriptions of the girl checked with your society girl friend, Dewert."

"Good God!"

"And that's not quite all, either. Annie located the driver of that taxi, just on a hunch. He told her they didn't take the girl to a hospital or to a house. They drove to a little out-of-the-way garage in Jersey City, where they had a car. She was still unconscious when they lifted her out of the cab and put her into their car. Annie checked it pretty well. The cab-driver noticed that their car had a Connecticut license, but he couldn't get the number. Now *if* that was the Graymaster dame, it would sort of explain how-come she left her own car in the parking-lot at the airport for two days."

"But what *happened*? Hasn't she appeared yet? Tell me the rest, will you?"

"Give me time, feller. Sure, she's back. She's been on the phone all yesterday, bawling me out for that story, and wanting to sue the paper for libel or misrepresentation or something. But there's a little more to the other part of it. I got a call from one of our Connecticut correspondents, saying that a big car—

pretty much like the car the taxi-driver described—got wrecked on the Danbury road near Middlevale. The local cops found it—just a heap of junk. A little blood and some broken glass, but nobody in it. Now, if all those hypotheses are right, that wreck *could* explain how that girl happened to be back in Tuxedo yesterday with a broken collar-bone and some scratches that didn't come from finger-nails."

"In Tuxedo? She's back in—"

"Sure she is. At the Fermats'. I sent Annie out there, but she couldn't get in, and Mrs. Fermat wasn't talking. Now, this is all hypothesis, and maybe I'm all wet; but I have a hunch that your Graymaster friend is up to her neck in a lot of funny-business. I want that story, Dewert. If you know anything at all about her, you'll have some explanation. . . . Hey—hey, come back here, you blankety-blank—"

But Bentley had started moving at the word *Tuxedo*, and was already out of the door and halfway down the hall.

IT would be hard to classify Ephraim Brood as a "last resort" in any department of Bentley's life; and yet on this particular evening the fiery little soap-manufacturer was something very much like that. For it was not until, having dashed out of the *Chronicle* offices and dashed into a telephone-booth and made a call to Tuxedo from a local drugstore, that Bentley had been able to get his thoughts back upon Brood and his schemes.

And even then, had not the Tuxedo call turned out the way it did, he might have forgotten both his contract and his bank-account until many days later.

But the Tuxedo call was unhappy.

A woman's voice, presumably Mrs. Doris Fermat's, answered him. Yes, Miss Graymaster was still in bed. Would she talk to a Mr. Destiny. . . . Was the name Destiny. . . . D-e-s-t-i-n-y? She would find out. And when Mrs. Fermat returned to the telephone, her statement was categorical, blunt and even harsh.

"Miss Graymaster will not talk to you. Not now or any other time. I suggest that you save both of us time and trouble by not making any further effort to communicate with her."

"But—but *please*—" Bentley had shouted into the transmitter, only to hear the wire go dead.

That ended that. A man will take a certain amount of high-handedness and

abuse, but there are limits. Bentley's natural vanity and self-respect came into the breach.

"I don't have to stand for it," he told himself, slamming the receiver in his turn. "The least she could do would be to hear what I've got to say. Suppose she is mad because I told Hartswell something and he sent reporters after her? If she had a grain of sense, she'd know I wouldn't be trying to talk with her unless I had a darned good explanation."

And as he left the booth, his own temper flared, and he muttered: "The devil with her! If she thinks I'm so darned low—"

It was after that episode that he remembered Brood.

"I ought," he told himself, "to have gone to see the old man right off—instead of running around like a moon-struck calf after a girl who—who doesn't care a snap of her fingers."

Which was, of course, common sense. And which, in its way, made Brood the last resort of a man deeply wounded in his pride and vanity.

EPHRAIM BROOD, fortunately enough, was lingering at his office after hours. He received Bentley with some enthusiasm, but he seemed only mildly impressed by the long recitation of Bentley's adventures.

"Not bad, boy," he commented. "Not bad at all—as far as it goes."

Bentley resented this attitude. Had he not, for the first time since his contract with Brood, actually attained and even surpassed the amount of earning which was his schedule? Had he not, out of practically nothing at all save a mere formula of words, created a bank-account that exceeded a quarter of a million dollars in a matter of 132 days? "Not bad," was it? "As far as it goes!"

"Just what do you mean, 'as far as it goes,' Mr. Brood?" he demanded. "Personally, I think it's pretty good. I think it's darned near a miracle."

"Hurumph!" snorted Brood. "That's just the trouble, boy. You still think Personal Mystery's a miracle. But it isn't. It's a perfectly natural thing. That's just what I'm trying to prove, Dewert. Trouble with you is, you go around being surprised at it. Too easy for you; that's what. Need to make it harder. Need to show—"

"Harder? How? I'd say—"

"Shut up, boy. I don't care what you'd say. I'm doing the saying now."

Fiery little man, this Brood. You never knew when he would explode in your face.

"What we need now is to go higher up, boy. Need to make contact with really big things, really big men. Got to get a bigger slant on this thing. My credo is that Personal Mystery will work anywhere and with any kind of humans, because they're all alike. What you've done, boy, is to work out on small-minded, short-visioned little people—two-by-four brokers and business men and water-bottlers and—"

"I wouldn't call Senator Pinkton such a small man," Bentley broke in, resentful. "And I wouldn't call World Fuels and those people exactly pikers, Mr. Brood—"

But the soap manufacturer waved them away.

"You wouldn't; but I would, boy. Because why? Because you don't know, and I do. Look at me, boy. I'm worth millions. Yessir, millions. I control one-third of the soap business of this country. But do you think I'm big? No, I'm not. I'm just a little dabbler, boy. Brood, the soap man: that's what. Plain nobody. It isn't money; it isn't selling a lot of things people don't really need. It isn't owning a pretty big plant and employing a thousand men or so. It isn't even being in the Senate and making long-winded speeches, boy. Even that is only half-pint compared to what I mean. . . . A little luck, some common sense and—"

Bentley grinned his derision.

"Come now, Mr. Brood, you wouldn't want me to get clubby with kings and dictators and Presidents, would you?"

BROOD either missed the jibe or ignored it.

"There are men," he asserted gravely, "who can wiggle their finger, and half the world will go to war. They are the real powers behind your dictators and kings, Dewert—yes, and behind your Presidents, too."

"Sounds rather—Graustarkian, sir," Bentley commented. "But suppose such miracle men do exist, just how do you expect me to get in touch with them? And if I did—well, I'm not conceited enough to think I could put anything over on them."

"Now wait, boy. Not so fast. You're not going to make contact with them—not necessarily. But you're going to let them know about you. That's all, boy."



And that's enough. Personal Mystery ought to do the rest. They may be big, but they're only human, boy. And Personal Mystery is the most human thing in the world. If it works with middle-sized men, it's bound to work with the big ones."

This was getting pretty fantastic, to Bentley's way of thinking. Perhaps the little man had developed some new type of delusion. Perhaps the success of his pet theory had gone to his head. Still, what of it? It didn't really matter, did it? He, Bentley, was under contract, wasn't he? And Brood just about owned him, didn't he? Besides, he had no complaints. He had done pretty well. It had been fun, too, and adventure. Better than ship-reporting, anyhow. And he had Brood to thank for it. If Brood got ideas about sending him to the moon, he ought to go. It didn't really matter. Didn't matter, now, that Lorraine—

"Well, Mr. Brood," he said suddenly, "you're the boss. You just tell me what you want me to do, and I'll do it."

Brood nodded as though he had taken all that as a matter of course.

"That's about right, boy," he said. "While ago, you thought I was crazy when I told you about Personal Mystery. But you learned differently, hey? And you'll learn again, boy. I know what I'm talking about. I've done a lot of planning and thinking while you've been away, boy. Got it figured out." He stopped pacing the room and went to his desk, drawing out a square envelope.

"Here," he said. "Put that in your pocket." Bentley took the envelope, moderately puzzled.

"Ever hear of the Society of Methuselah?" Brood asked him.

"Of course—everybody has, sir. It's a sort of club. They have a dingy old building down on lower Fifth Avenue—a bunch of old fogies. Nobody takes them seriously. I believe they all want to live to be a hundred or something. Bunch of faddists—they eat raw vegetables and drink duck's milk or something. But nobody—"

Brood stopped him short:

"Me, I'm a member, boy. I know more about it than you ever will."

Bentley reddened a little.

"Oh—sorry, sir. I didn't mean—"

"Never mind what you meant, boy. Doesn't matter. All you can know is the general public's impression—what the papers print. But there's a lot more in that club than meets the eye, boy. Even the members don't know all of it. Now you take that card and go down there. It'll give you full membership privileges as my guest for one month. That's long enough. Too long even. You go down and live there, Dewert. That's all you have to do . . . and let Personal Mystery take its course."

Bentley stared at him.

"But . . . but how . . . who are the big men you talk about? Who do I look for . . . I don't see what you want . . ."

"That's all right, boy. You've got your instructions." He was suddenly brisker, more final. "Get going. I've got work to do here. Good night."

Slowly Bentley got out of his chair and started toward the door. As he laid his hand on the knob, however, Brood called out to him.

"Remember, boy, this isn't going to be easy. Don't go there with too much conceit. They won't exactly welcome you at the Methuselah—not the type."

Bentley thought briefly, then said in a sober voice:

"I see. I guess I can take it, sir."

"Hurrumph!" snorted Brood. "Good luck, boy."

THE "Temple" of Methuselah, as the six-story lump of dull-brown limestone is commonly called, is not, today, the pretentious edifice that once it was. Built in the late years of the 1890's under the architectural influence then called *fin de siècle*, its tinsel dome and candy-work *mâchicoulis* were considered unutterably bold by its contemporaries.

But the passage of time and the arrival of an electro-mechanical age of

streamlining and vast skyscrapers, have tarnished the earlier sheen of the place; and today, in our more sophisticated people, among whom vitamins, genes and metabolism have grown to be household words, both the silhouette and once-faddish purpose of the place have grown to be a thing at which to smile.

It must be clearly stated, however, that the members of the Society of Methuselah—called “Fellows in Methuselah”—are not quite as antiquated as is their temple. Although the club was founded as a sort of haven for age-ridden men who hoped, by following the principles of the noted Dr. Alexis Yurtel,—who in 1887 announced that he had discovered a secret of longevity in the chewing of uncooked tubers and other vegetable roots,—it grew in time to have a slightly different meaning. The desire for long life is not limited to those who are already aged. Younger men became members as the Yurtel fad took hold. Gradually the costly equipment—gymnasium, laboratories, swimming baths and solaria—began to increase the cost of membership privileges, until the Fellows in Methuselah, became more and more limited to those who had considerable wealth. By 1900 the Temple was looked upon as a sort of millionaires’ nest. By 1913 it had become a haven for the wealthy conservatives who prefer quiet retreat to newspaper publicity. During the war this aspect of the club became the more fixed. And today the accent, in the Society of Methuselah, is far more heavily laid upon fatness of purse, blueness of blood and straightness of family tree than upon the now-exploded fad of the forgotten Dr. Yurtel.

IN short, the Fellows in Methuselah are, perhaps, the most exclusive group of cliff-dwellers in and about New York, if not in the entire country.

And so Bentley found them.

It was perhaps natural enough, that the Fellows in Methuselah did not receive this John J. Destiny with the open arms of real enthusiasm. To put it kindly, he did not look the part of a man qualified, socially and spiritually, to be taken to the bosom of that most select group. He wore his hat at too jaunty an angle; that camel’s hair coat was a bit over-loud; he walked with a stride which did not reveal sober, well-controlled poise. His cheeks were too ruddy, his chin too firm, his voice too assertive. He gave evidence, in short, of being a young man



who could be suspected of having actually done hard work for a living. Decent enough, clean enough, not quite the roughneck type, of course, but definitely missing something which should stamp him as being of “the right sort of people.”

Then again, this young fellow had been sent to the club by its one recalcitrant member, that Ephraim Brood. Brood had been a minor problem in the Methuselah. His considerable wealth and his unquestionable importance in the world of affairs had made it difficult to refuse him membership when he was proposed some years before. Still, the acceptable social graces had never been Brood’s. Besides, in this day, after the sad year of 1929, it was almost vulgar to have so much money.

It could scarcely be said that those gentlemen who lounged with graceful idleness in the reading rooms or poked innocent billiard-balls about a table with costly if inept cues, were rude to Bentley. They were gentlemen, after all, and the disapproval of true aristocracy takes a form more subtle than mere rudeness.

But he had been among the Methuselahs but a few hours before he had sensed that the latch-string of their collective hearts was not dangling out for him. He found them difficult to talk with. They did not seek him for a fourth at bridge, nor did they urge him to join their billiard games. In the beautiful swimming bath which the club affords, the members romped and disported themselves as any men will, but somehow this Mr. Destiny was not included in their fun. And when, late that evening, he

all but thrust himself into a group of fine old snowy-haired gentlemen who were grumbling bitterly over the ailments of a world which had allowed their once large incomes to dwindle to a mere annual five figures, he made a most unfortunate impression.

THAT group sat up late, smoking and sipping their whisky toddies. They were rich men—men who had, in an earlier generation, made their mark in the world. Mr. Ethlin Randolph Burr, for instance, lamented a snug fortune in steel shares which had suffered in value with the panic of 1929. Mr. Eaton J. Baliff, whose name had been legend in the Wall Street of the late nineties, was bemoaning his holdings in buildings whose rent yield had faded to a mere fraction. Mr. Mortimer Fortleigh was the owner of the Fortleigh Mercantile Transportation Corporation, a formerly important freight carrier now all but forgotten to international trade. He was regretting the state of world affairs which caused his aging vessels to ply half-empty across the Atlantic while newer, smarter, but entirely disreputable companies boasted of well-filled bottoms. In a chorus they blamed the Administration, the Gulf Stream, the “new order of things,” and the general cussedness of a decadent world. And hearing them, Bentley made the youthful error of offering them a comment which was less than tactful. He chimed in:

“The world hasn’t changed any, gentlemen. The real trouble is ourselves, the people. We like to sit around and live in the sunshine of our past instead of getting out and *doing* something about the present.” Which was deplorably bad taste, and which he made worse by adding:

“There’s more money and more goods in circulation today than ever in history. All we have to do is to grab our share.”

This was arrant treason. The three grumbling gentlemen snorted, arose and bustled out like a trio of indignant walruses. Who was this young cub to talk such rot? Damned impudent puppy! Impossible people, these outsiders!

And so Bentley made an inauspicious beginning. He did not belong, and they made him feel it keenly. He was an intruder, and none of his quite natural graces served him with these hard-shells. Still less, of course, did it help him when the whisper went about that John Destiny was the name of that young ex-

hibitionist who figured in the newspapers some little time back under the grandiloquent title of the “White Knight.” Even in that cloistered temple some persons read the news and remember it. It was unthinkable, the “White Knight” at the Methuselah!

There came, however, a day when this was changed a little. There is a practice at the Methuselah, as indeed in many other clubs, of inviting distinguished citizens to an informal luncheon and prevailing upon them to speak upon some topic on which they are an authority. Had Bentley been less depressed at his social discomfort he might, indeed, have discovered the posting of one of these “Wednesday Political Luncheons” upon the bulletin board in the club’s lobby. As it happened, however, he did not. His spirit was low, his mind too greatly absorbed in his own chagrin. And so that Wednesday noon he was not aware that the guest of honor who would address the luncheon upon the moot subject, “Common Sense and Taxation,” was none other than Senator Axel G. Pinkton.

The Senator was arriving from the capital on a morning train. He was met at the station by a delegation of clubmen and escorted with due honors to the Methuselah. The grand old man stood for a brief moment in the center of a chatting group in the main lobby while they were all waiting for the elevator to carry them up to the dining-room, and it was by the merest chance that he happened to spy the solitary young man, hands in pockets, eyes cast down, making his way toward the cloakroom. For Bentley had had enough. He had made up his mind to leave the oppressive atmosphere of the Methuselah and to take his luncheon in some restaurant where the bustle of crowds might dispel his dark thoughts.

“Hello,” said the Senator, interrupting a conversation in which he was but indifferently interested. “I say, who’s that young chap? Reminds me of—”

WHEN he was informed that he was “just a chap visiting here for a few days,” the worthy Senator was not satisfied. He stepped away from the group and rumbled loudly:

“Destiny? That you over there, Destiny?” And when Bentley, surprised at hearing his name, looked up, the Senator came pounding over toward him, ignoring the shocked and amazed glances of the club members, or not seeing them.

"What the devil you doing here, Destiny—of all places? I've been looking for you, young man. Now you come right along with me."

And the Methuselah disciples saw their distinguished guest, with a great naturalness and frank demonstration of pleasure, greet and put his arm on the shoulders of this impossible intruder in a manner both fatherly and friendly.

NOR did it stop there. Nothing would suffice but that Bentley should not only join them at luncheon, but he must also sit beside the Senator. Bentley's own embarrassment, to be sure, was no less than that of the society members, but Pinkton noticed neither one nor the other. His pleasure at seeing Bentley was open, frank and outspoken. He told the clubmen proudly that they were harboring in their bosom the "smartest young rascal out of jail, believe it or not, gentlemen." He laughed and he joked, and he became anecdotal at Bentley's expense, quite as though he, the Senator, had both discovered and invented this prodigy.

"Ought to be rich as Cræsus, that young feller," the white-haired Senator declaimed. "He's got the Midas touch. Never saw anything like this boy in my life, gentlemen. Ought to know, too. I hired him once. Practically saved my Pinkwater business, he did." Then he bellowed: "I'll tell you what, gentlemen. This young whippersnapper had the nerve to tell me he was worth a million dollars a year. Imagine that, eh? Well, I called his bluff, gentlemen. And then he called mine. He *was* worth it. He's a wonder. He turned the trick that put Pinkwater back into the lead again . . . pulling rabbits out of a hat, gentlemen. Remember that X-element advertising gag, eh? Well, he did that—"

And he thumped Bentley soundly on the back while the Society of Methuselah gaped with wonder.

"And then what, gentlemen?" the Senator roared on. "I offer him a job—best job in the country. I'd have paid him his million, gentlemen. Believe me, I would. But what's he do, eh? He turns me down cold. He walks out on me. Walks out on a million dollars a year. Can you imagine that?"

They certainly could not imagine that. They stared at this impossible Mr. Destiny with a renewed interest.

"Now what say, son?" The Senator persisted. "I need you out there in

Pinkton. That job's still open. What say you take it—go out there this very day and show those dubs how to run a business, eh? How about it?"

And, flushed with embarrassment at having the spotlight thus turned upon him, Bentley was forced to refuse.

"Thank you, sir, but I'm afraid I can't accept it. Sorry, but other interests are—well, pretty active just now."

And the entire table sat and stared in unbelieving wonderment.

Presently it was time for the Senator's address. He gave it. Applause rose and died. The luncheon was over. And after making one more futile attempt to persuade this stubborn young Destiny to return to Pinkton, the old man departed grumbling:

"Damned young fool—bah!"

And the gentlemen of the Methuselah Society were duly impressed.

"Other business interests!" Who in thunder was this young Destiny, after all? Perhaps they had not quite appreciated him.

Perhaps indeed.

BUT the commentary of Senator Pinkton upon the "amazing Mr. Destiny" had an outcome far more remarkable than that of causing the gentlemen of Methuselah to modify their opinion of that young man. It so happened that among the company at the Senatorial luncheon table was a burly, out-doors-looking fellow who had been introduced as George Brastle, an engineer. His only excuse for being present in the club was that, returning from an industrial mission into the interior of Haiti, he had taken passage on one of Mr. Mortimer Fortleigh's freight steamers, and had made the acquaintance of the shipping man, who was himself returning from a cruise of inspection.

Brastle was plainly impressed by the Senator's anecdotes concerning this young Mr. Destiny; and after the luncheon was finished, he contrived, by accident or design, to place himself near Bentley and engage him in conversation.

"I'm a man of plain words," he said, after preliminary remarks along more general lines. "And I don't mind telling you frankly, young feller, that I'm glad to make your acquaintance. With a boost such as the Senator handed you, you ought to be living on Easy Street the rest of your life."

Bentley was embarrassed, but managed to say:

"I fancy I'll get along. The Senator was joking. He put it on pretty thick!"

"Not too thick for me, son," said Brastle. "And that's why I wanted to talk with you. You must have quite a bit of money by this time, when men like Pinkton talk about million-dollar jobs for you. What's your game?"

"That," said Bentley, not forgetting his old refrain, "will have to remain a



mystery, I'm afraid—a kind of Personal Mystery."

"Hm-m-m," said Brastle. "Have it your own way, then. What I want to know is, how'd you like to be a king man in the mining industry?"

Bentley was mildly shocked at such a question. It smacked of a come-on game of some kind. Still, the man had seemed pretty blunt and frank, and he did not have the look of a cheap swindler. The out-of-doors type seldom are.

"Being a king in any industry is an enviable job," Bentley admitted. "I'm not ambitious in that direction, however. And as to mining, that's not in my line."

Brastle looked around carefully to see if he was observed. He was not. He produced from his pocket a lump of cloth which, when he unwrapped it, revealed a smaller lump of some red, stone-like substance.

"Know what that is?" asked Brastle.

Bentley did not.

"That's cinnabar."

"I'll bite—what's cinnabar?"

"Ore. They distill quicksilver from it—mercury, you know."

Who was this young cub?
Damned impudent puppy!

"Oh."

"Know what mercury's place in industry is?"

"Not very definitely."

The engineer was warming up now. His deep eyes gleamed. His face flushed a little. His breath was perceptibly faster.

"Mercury's the most valuable mineral in the world today. Gold don't count. Platinum neither. Nor diamonds. Mercury's the real gold of today, Mr. Destiny. Industrial gold. You can't do much without it, nowadays. Amalgams, high explosives like fulminate of mercury, electrical switches and rectifiers—not to mention medicinal and chemical uses for mercury derivatives. Take mercury away from a modern country, and you've put 'em back into the Dark Ages. And do you know how much mercury there is in the world?"

"Couldn't guess."



"Damned little. Not half enough. The oldest mines are the Almaden in Spain. Then there's the New Almaden in California. Between the two, they mine about two-thirds of the whole output on the world. There's a cinnabar mine in Italy, near Trieste, and a spot of the stuff in Russia, and another spot in Mexico. And that's exactly all."

"Only five mines in the whole world?" Bentley was feeling an interest in spite of himself. There was a certain romance about a liquid metal that was so vital to modern industry and yet found in only five places.

"That's right." He gave Bentley a queer look. "Or I better say it *was* right, until last year."

"Last year?"

"Yes. I struck cinnabar in Haiti. Rich, too. You know Haiti? No? Well, it's a volcanic island. Tertiary period. Mountains rise more than four thousand feet right out of the sea. Igneous rock—andesites, rhyolites and basalts. Last year I tried to run down a rumor that there was bauxite in Haiti. I exploded

that. There isn't any. But I did find cinnabar—a rich vein that might run to five hundred feet or more below the surface. I didn't have the apparatus to give it a proper workout, but I know mines, and this one is worth millions, Destiny—cold millions. Billions, maybe."

"I gather that mercury gets a high price," was Bentley's comment.

"It's not that," said Brattle. "It's the lack of supply. And especially right now. . . . Spain and Italy being tied up in the Rome-Berlin bloc, that leaves Russia in Europe. Well, Russia's a Soviet Union. Let anything go queer—and everything seems to be going queer—and Russia wouldn't sell the world a nickel's worth of the stuff. Needs all she can mine, and more. That leaves California and Mexico. Well, the Mexican cinnabar amounts to a thimbleful. So what? There's the U.S.A. left to supply the whole world, except the Fascist countries and Russia, with industrial mer-

cury. They can't do it. Or if they can, the prices will go so sky high that the other countries will just look for substitutes or change their industrial system. And now I've got a mine—right in harmless, agricultural Haiti, Mister. What's that make me?"

"A billionaire, I guess," Bentley ventured.

"Like hell it does. It makes me a beggar. And right now I'm begging, Destiny. I'm asking you for cash money."

"WHAT for?"

"I'll tell you. I had a spot of money myself, and when I hit this ore, I guess I went kind of crazy. I bought a ninety-nine-year lease on a whole damned mountain from the Haitian government—two hundred and fifty thousand gourdes, that cost me. About fifty thousand American dollars. Fine, hey? Sure, only I forgot about operating costs, I forgot there isn't any train, and that trucks cost money. I can't swing it, Destiny. I'm licked. I came within spitting distance of a billion dollars, and I'm licked clean. That's what's the matter. That's why I fanned around that fat old Fortleigh and got him to bring me here to this millionaires' dump. That's straight, see?"

He paused for breath. He was almost panting as he spoke. Then he went on.

"And I'll tell you another. This is straight, too. I'm not good at puttering around and handing out hard-luck stories. I can't beg. But I'll sell you that damned lease, Destiny, for just what it cost me—fifty thousand bucks. I can't handle it. I'm licked, done, finished, washed up. I've got a wife and five kids down there waiting for me to come back. They think I'm God. They think I'm rich. And they don't know that I had to borrow the very suit of clothes I've got on. Why? Because I sold 'em out. Sold 'em out for a dream of cornering a chunk of the world's mercury. And that's my story. Will you buy that lease, Mister?"

Just how does a man's mind work in cases like that? Bentley's earlier skepticism had changed as this vibrant, earnest man had gone on speaking, pouring out his heart, betraying his own humiliation, frankly admitting his motives, revealing his exploded dreams. In his mind Bentley was conscious of a growing picture—of tremendous power, of world-command. What was it Brood had said? Something like: "There are men who can snap their fingers and change the

economic face of the earth—big men, king-makers." This was the kind of thing. Not perhaps exactly what Brood had intended, but bigger still, in a sense. Here was something you could get your teeth into. Something vital, something strong and important. None of your Wall Street shysters, none of your half-cracked inventors, none of your puny merchandising of somebody's spring-water. Mercury, the real gold of modern industry.

"Can you prove to me you've got that lease?" he asked Brastle.

"I can put it in your hand. Read French? Yes? Well, you can read that lease. Not only that: you can take it to the Haitian consulate here in New York, and they'll tell you it's good."

"And how do I know you've really got that chunk of cinnabar from your leased mountain? I don't even know it's cinnabar. I'm no mining man, Mr. Brastle. I don't want to make a fool of myself. . . . Don't get offended. I'm just trying to be careful."

Brastle's face fell. The light went out of his eyes.

"Hell," he said, "you've got me there. I can't prove it, Destiny. You'll have to take my word for it or not—unless you come down to Haiti with me and bring a couple of experts. Why not? You've got the money."

"Maybe, but not the time."

Brastle had taken a long flat manila envelope from an inner pocket and was fumbling with the flap when Bentley made that observation. Suddenly he slapped it together again and thrust it back into his pocket.

"Well," he said, "that's that. I don't blame you. I wouldn't buy a mine sight unseen myself—only—only you had me going, for a minute. I thought you'd—oh, hell, never mind."

He stood up roughly and started pounding out toward the hall, while the annoyed faces of men reading in their accustomed chairs lifted up in wonder to stare at the big man whose footsteps shook the room.

SUDDENLY Bentley was sorry—not exactly sorry for Brastle. You can't be sorry for a six-foot Hercules with the sun's own energy gleaming through his skin. But he was sorry about him. True, he had no proof at all that the man was not working a clever swindle, that there was any such mine, that the chunk of vermilion ore (if it was ore) he'd held in

his hand was cinnabar. And yet a man could hardly be acting a part when he had that peculiar throb in his voice as he told about such wonders as that mercury mine. There would be something deeply tragic in sending a man like that back to a wife and children who thought him God, who believed in his godliness, who didn't know that he had spent their last penny on a bright dream, who had come to New York in one last frantic attempt to regain his own sense of honor.

"Besides," he reasoned in that quick flash of mind, "I've got the money. . . . I've got nearly a quarter of a million dollars cash. And this is the way big money is made: you get a stake, and you put that money to work for you. Why shouldn't I put my money to work—if he can show me he's got the lease? If that mine's worth a damn, it's salable to some big company. Maybe a feller like Jo Caddis could swing it for me."

And before he had completed his thought, he was out of his seat and running after George Brastle.

"Wait!" he called, to the complete scandalizing of the Methuselah's hushed rooms. "Brastle . . . wait a minute. I'll do it. I'll take a chance."

Brastle halted. The light had come back into his eyes again.

"By God, Destiny," he said, "you handed me a bad turn. Let's get out of here and go down to the Haitian Consulate. I want to prove to you that my lease is okay. I can do that much, at least. . . . And I'm certainly damned grateful to you, besides."

IT is two days later. It is also fifty thousand dollars later.

Likewise one lease later, and one invisible mercury mine later. Later also by one sleepless night and an entire day of growing concern, of suspicion, of worry.

And all those things were the causes through which Bentley Dewert is to be found announcing himself to Alma, the gum-chewing receptionist at the sumptuous but faintly phony offices of "Pyramid" Jo Caddis, Wall Street's most brazen promoter of faintly questionable corporations.

Jo Caddis himself is hard to see. He sits ensconced in a small interior office where thundering and angry ex-clients cannot easily find him to pour out their wrath. His desk is a litter of telephones and scraps of paper—and feet. At the moment the feet are Jo's own, neatly

shining from a morning polish. Frequently there are many other feet reposing on Jo's desk, for Jo is a homely soul. He loves to make his visitors feel at ease. He considers that to be entirely at ease, one must put one's feet on a level with one's eyes, recline in a chair which tilts dangerously but never betrays the tipper, and blow heavy smoke from one of Jo's private brand.

BENTLEY is shown into the homely sanctum.

"Hello, feller, how's tricks?" Thus Jo greets him, adding: "What in hell makes you look so sourpuss, hey? Got another nutty inventor up your sleeve? Spill it, son. Tell Uncle Jo."

And Bentley told Uncle Jo. "I wish it were as simple as just another inventor, Jo," he said. "And as cheap, too. This time I have a hunch I'm stuck with a fifty-thousand-dollar loss."

"Whew! Fifty grand! Feller, you musta been makin' a couple pennies, to lose fifty grand. . . . But what've you done now?"

Bentley told him the story.

Jo Caddis became boisterously, loudly, gloriously, artistically profane. When the outburst was over, more for lack of breath than of material or vocabulary, he panted:

"A mercury mine! Holy, jeepers creepers! I thought you was smart, son. I thought you had what it takes. And if you don't go and hand fifty grand to some duck with a hard-luck story—on a mine. Lemme see that lease."

Bentley produced the lease. Jo studied it with care.

"This is French. Maybe I'm not so long on French. You say you checked this with the consulate?"

"Yes. I had sense enough to do that. I actually own this lease—control that mountain for ninety-nine years."

"Too long, son, too long. You won't live to enjoy it. Well, what you come to me for? Think I'll buy the damn' thing? Not your uncle Jo Caddis."

"No, I didn't think you would. I thought—well, I had an idea—well, you see, I know you've promoted a lot of mines, Jo."

"Yeah, and I've sold solid gold bricks. Once I sold a feller shares in the World's Fair—that was the St. Louis fair. But listen, son: you could see those things. They existed. You could feel 'em and see 'em and find 'em on a map. But I draw the line at sellin' a chunk of a hill



"I'll take a chance, Brastle; I'll do it," said Bentley. And Brastle halted. "I'm certainly grateful to you, Destiny."

in some damn' island in the middle of an ocean, when maybe it don't even have a tree on it. That's crooked. I'm a swindler, not a crook."

He looked as though he meant it, too. Bentley was crestfallen.

"I guess you're right, Jo," he said. "Well, never mind. I can take it, I guess. Just a sucker, that's all."

Jo Caddis had a kindly streak in him.

"Don't take it so hard, kid," he said. "Listen at this. Maybe—just maybe, mind you, you played in luck. If that mine is there, and you own that lease, you're practically worth millions. Think of it."

"I did," said Bentley. "That's what ruined me. Better forget it, Jo."

But Caddis had his own methods.

"Tell you what. I've got ways of finding things out—yeah, even about places like Haiti. You lemme keep the lease awhile. Now, what's that bird's name?"

"George Brastle. He claims to be an engineer."

"Yeah, like I'm a trapeze artist," muttered Jo. "Didja miss one thing on this lease, kid? Maybe I aint so long in French, but I can tell when a lease is

right. There aint no mention of any sum of money in it. Also there aint no mention of any name, see? It says, '*Quatre-vingt dix-neuf ans ou pendant la vie du signataire.*' That means your ninety-nine years, all right, or for the lifetime of the guy who signs it, but it's all mixed up. There isn't any signature except some damned official's. And it doesn't say a word about a mine or about mercury."

"I know. They told me at the consulate that it's a kind of lease called a *bail par acte sous seign*, whatever that means, and it's special. Apparently anybody who presents the contract can use the land for anything during his lifetime."

"Huh! Soft-hearted Annie, that's you, son. Brastle, hey? Wife and kiddies, hey? Fifty grand! Jeepers creepers! Well, I'll see what I can find out. I'll let you know if you're a millionaire or just another sucker. Be seein' yuh, son. . . ."

The next few days were hard to take. True, at the Methuselah things were better. Now that this young Mr. Destiny had been established as a sort of prodigy, the purely formal social barriers were

forgotten and he found himself drawn more frequently into the routine of club-life. But he had forgotten that now. The thing that troubled his mind was the vivid probability that, in a moment of stimulated fancy and visionary imagining—not to mention a sort of hope that that distant Mrs. Brastle and the five little Brastles would have their father back again—he had tossed away fifty thousand dollars. Fifty thousand dollars! It fairly screamed at him. The atmosphere of his depression was thick and blue and sickly.

AND when, that day, Jo Caddis bel-
lowed and chortled the bad news
over the telephone, it plunged Bentley in-
to a Slough of Despond without bottom.
Said Caddis:

"So you're a quicksilver millionaire, hey? I almost gotta laugh, if I didn't gotta cry. Listen, on my desk right here I got a telegram from a feller in Port-au-Prince, and what he says about this Brastle is plenty."

"Let's have it," said Bentley. "I guess it can't be any worse than I think it is."

"Yeah? Well, this Brastle, he aint got no wife and kids. That was just a sob-story. He's a beachcomber, practically. He used to be an engineer, but he's a down-and-outer now, see? Ten years ago he come down there for an American outfit on an engineering job, and he went bust. He stayed bust, too. He went a little crazy. He's been prospecting around those mountains for all kinds of metal, and there aint no metal in Haiti. First it was gold, then lead, then zinc, then it was lithograph stone, and then it was bauxite. And now it's mercury. He's been tryin' to get some coin off of a big German coffee planter down there, but all he got was laughed at."

Bentley groaned.

"And did he tell you he paid fifty grand for that lease, feller? Listen, if he paid more than a hundred bucks, he was crazy. For fifty grand you could lease the whole island, except maybe Port-au-Prince and a couple places; gee, that guy must be a real actor, what I mean. What he done is to duck out of the place before they jailed him for running bills he can't pay. He musta had ideas of workin' on that shipping man, only when he met you, he figured you was a bigger sucker. And boy, was he right!"

Bentley was sick by this time, but still Caddis went boisterously on:

"Besides which, son, you got a lifetime lease on a mountain. That lease is okay, all right; but so what? Know where that mountain is? Morne à Cabrit, they call it, and it means Goat Mountain. And you're the goat, feller. It's seventy miles from a railroad, and there aint no roads, and it runs halfway up to heaven, if that voodoo gang have a heaven. And even if the place was squirting mercury, you couldn't get it out to the seacoast without you spend half a million dollars to build a railroad.

"Well, son, you had a lotta fun, hey? I don't think. But it gives me a fat laugh. The boy wonder of Wall Street let's 'em sell him a quicksilver mine what aint. Whoops! Drop in sometime and pick up your lease. You can paste it in your scrapbook. Be seein' yuh."

YOU couldn't do much about those fig-
ures. Bentley had been yielding to the
urge of his New England conscience and
was trying to force himself to face the
facts. They were not pretty facts. He
could add them up and make new totals,
but the meaning was always the same.

"Seventy thousand dollars short of
schedule!" that was the constant refrain
in his mind. "I ought to have nearly
four hundred thousand in the bank—
actually \$396,000 for 152 days. And
what have I got? Just three hundred
and twenty-six thousand dollars. And
fifty grand of that is what I just handed
out as a gift to a smart panhandler.
Don't I just love it! And won't it make
a nice story to tell Old Man Brood!"

But there it was. He tried to forget it.
He tried to take his mood from it. Piled
on his desk were the newspapers of every
day since the fatal transaction, unopened,
unread. Forgotten was Hartswell and
the *Chronicle's* dressed-up story of Lor-
raine Graymaster. With an idle gesture
of lassitude, he pushed the pile of news-
print to the floor, all save the morning
edition of that very day. This he spread
out in front of him and made the effort
to focus his eyes upon it, but it blurred
before him. . . .

A knock at the door. A page-boy
thrust his head in, saying:

"A gentleman downstairs to see you,
sir. Name of Brastle."

"Huh? Who? Send him right up,
boy."

The page vanished.

Brastle! What the devil did that
open-faced crook want now? Did he
come to gloat and to laugh? Bentley

would tell him a few. He would see that so-and-so in jail. . . .

Then Brastle was at the door—no longer the hearty, athletic, sun-tanned engineer whose honest face and rugged manner had won Bentley's confidence, but a stooped, grimy, whitened man with lines of dissipation making bags under his eyes, his step heavy and lifeless.

"It's no go, Destiny," he croaked as he came in. "No, don't say anything until I finish. I can't go through with it. I'm just a damned drunken louse. I've suffered hell, Destiny, trying to make myself keep that money—but I'm not that low. I can't make the grade."

It was hard to condemn a man who could face you and admit guilt that way.

"Sit down, Brastle," was as far as Bentley could get. The engineer slumped into a chair. Lifelessly he picked up some of the fallen newspapers from the floor.

"God!" he said. "I can't even see the type. Haven't seen a paper for days. Anything new?"

"No," said Bentley. Why prolong conversation with this man. "I haven't read 'em."

BRASTLE groaned and leaned on the desk. He fumbled in his pockets and pulled out several crumpled rolls of dirty bills.

"Here," he said. "Here's your money—most of it. I've spent about two thousand, more or less. I've been drunk—drunk on your money, Destiny! I stuck you for that lease. It didn't cost me fifty dollars, let alone fifty thousand. But I can't go through with it. Here's your money—give me the dirty thing back. I'm short what I spent of this, but I'll make it up to you. I swear I will. I'm just a bum, Destiny. Always have been. Always will be. But I'm not that low. I can't take this money. Give me that damned lease back again. I'll be frank with you, Destiny: there *might* be cinabar in those mountains. I just don't know. I did find a little, but that doesn't prove much. I came up here to milk somebody for enough to pull myself together on—but it's useless. I wish you'd just forget it. I can't ask you to forgive it, but—hell, give me the damned lease, and I'll be on my way."

It was an incredible scene. The man's features registered a deep anguish of soul that uprooted all of Bentley's thoughts of anger. It takes nerve to come and

face a man squarely when you've tried to cheat him.

"You're pretty good stuff underneath, Brastle," he said. "I won't forget this part of it. If it's any good to you at all, I want you to know that I respect your coming here like this more than if you hadn't tried to sell me out. But you'll have to wait for the lease. . . . I left it down at my broker's place. You see—well, I found out about you through him. I'll get it this afternoon for you. And that's all right about the two thousand. You're welcome to it. Forget it."

Brastle lurched to his feet and held out a shaky hand.

"You're a white man, Destiny. I'll never forget this. And say, why can't I meet you down at your broker's?"

Bentley told him Caddis' office address, adding:

"Better make it three o'clock. That's after Exchange closing."

Brastle nodded and started to go. Then he pointed to the pile of newspapers on the floor.

"Mind if I take these along?"

"Take 'em away," Bentley told him; and he sagged out of the door.

It took long minutes for Bentley to believe the strange freak of fortune which had saved his fifty thousand dollars. The thing had come so suddenly, so swiftly. He picked up the day's paper which still lay on his desk.

IT was on an inside page that he found it. It did not seem to have any direct importance for him, now that he was no longer interested in quicksilver, but the bare word "mercury" set him to reading the article.

U. S. EMBARGOES MERCURY, OTHER METALS AS STRONG ARMAMENT PROGRAM BEGINS

Tired at last of lagging behind the furiously arming countries of Europe, Uncle Sam has declared an embargo on mercury (quicksilver) and derivative products in order to assure an abundant supply of this mineral so important in high explosives.

The full economic effect of the new embargo, declared last night after the Fetcham Bill successfully defeated all opposition in the Senate, is considered likely to be far-reaching and even seriously threatening to the industrial welfare of certain countries which depend upon American-mined quicksilver for their entire industrial supply.

While the United States is not the sole

producer of mercury in the world, the New Almaden mines in California are estimated to furnish approximately one-third of the world's consumption of this invaluable liquid metal, there being mined in Spain, now under the influence of the Rome-Berlin axis, and in Russia, whose deposits of cinnabar (mercury ore) and calomel are scarcely adequate for her own needs—

Bentley stared at the story. He read it and reread it. He got up and paced his room. And finally he whistled long and softly:

"Whew! Now I wonder, friend Destiny, if we were just on the point of being had again. Maybe if we're smart, we can get back our corner in Personal Mystery—and make a couple of pennies besides."

Whereupon he hurried to the telephone-booth down the hall and put in a call for Jo Caddis' office.

"Hello, soft-touch," chirped Jo on the phone. "Wanna buy some nice mining stock today? Let's see, I got it some fake coppers and some used-up tins and maybe a couple gold mines in Jersey. What say, feller?"

"Save all that and answer me a few questions, Jo," Bentley told him. "Did you read the paper about the embargo on mercury?"

"What you think I am—got nothin' to do but read papers?"

"Well, listen; the U. S. is holding all mercury in this country, see? War measure—we're taking armament seriously. Does that say anything to you?"

"What would it say?"

"Would any mining company be interested in a new cinnabar vein in Haiti, supposing there is a vein?"

THERE was a long silence. Jo Caddis was a queer fish. He had his own ways, and often they were inscrutable to others.

"Well, I'll bite," he said. "Suppose there is some sucker who might be interested, then what?"

"Would they buy my lease?"

"Why would they?"

"Listen, you dumb cluck! If America controls a third of the world's quicksilver and then refuses to export it, and if another third is tied up with Spain, Italy and Germany, who won't let it out either, how is the world going to get along on the remaining third? Somebody's got to be interested in getting mercury out of Haiti."

"Yeah, if there is any down there."

"Well, *how* interested?"

"Son, you got a pipe-dream. Forget it. This is Uncle Jo telling you."

"All right, then, I'm selling Brastle back his lease. He was here this morning, trying to give me my money back. I'm going to let him get away with it. He's meeting me at your office this afternoon at three o'clock."

Another long silence; then:

"So we got it another softie on our hands. An' here I thought there was one honest-to-God hard guy left. Okay, son, bring him down. I'll be seein' yuh."

WHEN Bentley reached Caddis' office, it was two-forty. He had been busy the earlier part of that afternoon making urgent telephone-calls. He was not entirely content to let go of the dream he had had concerning the possibility of handling that mercury deposit. Out of the telephone directory he had procured a list of firm-names found under the general heading "Mining and Minerals," and as he called each one separately, he had asked a question. Most of the answers had been negative.

"Are you interested," he had demanded, "in the possibility of a newly discovered cinnabar deposit outside of the United States but not in Europe or in Asia?"

The companies which had replied, "No sir," were two large copper-mines with headquarters in New York, a silver mining corporation which was Canadian with only a branch office here, and a sulphur company. They had been brief and firm.

Another company, the American Minerals and Ore Refining Corporation, had said:

"What is this, a gag? There isn't any cinnabar in the world that we don't know about, Mister. If you have a proposition put it in writing and we'll hand it to our engineers."

But when he was connected with the chief engineer of John L. Sindon & Sons, Mineralogists, the reply had been less definite.

"Where is it?" was the first response.

"I've got it," Bentley said. "I own a lease on it for ninety-nine years. It's in the south, and it isn't Mexico. Are you still interested?"

"Maybe, if you can prove you've got something."

"Will you send a man to meet me at my broker's this afternoon at three?"

"Certainly. What's the address?"

Bentley told him.

"Caddis?" said the voice. "Just a minute." There was a prolonged silence, then the voice said;

"Say, is this a gag? Did you mean Jo Caddis?"

"Sure I did," said Bentley on the defensive. "What's the matter with him?"

"Skip it," said the voice. "I'll be there myself. I'm John Sindlon, Jr."

And so Bentley arrived at Jo's office at twenty minutes to three.

"I'm not going to let you kid me out of a chance to get some real money out of that mine, Jo," he told the promoter. "I've got a hunch that our friend Brastle saw that story in the paper before I did, and has been selling that lease to somebody else. He sounded pretty plausible, but a feller who can act the way he did the first time could do it again."

"Huh!" grunted Jo Caddis. "Now what you done?"

Bentley told him. Caddis started to laugh.

"Feller," said Jo Caddis, choking his mirth, "there's something about you I like. When you come around, things happen. So we'll have this Brastle bird here, and we'll have this feller Sindlon, too, hey? This is gonna be good. Me, I'll stay on the sidelines. And by the way, I got somebody comin' in about three o'clock too. Friend o' mine. You don't mind if he sits in and sees the fun?"

"You," said Bentley, who had had enough of that banter, "can go to hell."

AT three o'clock, on the second, Mr. George Brastle came into Jo Caddis' office. He was shaven and washed, and the lines of dissipation had vanished from his face. He reeked of hair- tonic, and he seemed in somewhat of a hurry.

"I feel decent about doing this, Destiny," he said, laying a large handful of large-denomination bills upon Caddis' desk. "I guess a fellow can go too far sometimes, and it sort of snaps him out of it. If you'll give me the lease—"

"Hold everything." This was Jo Caddis, with a smile. "Don't rush me, Mr. Brastle. I wanna shake your hand. I wanna say I admire a guy which can back down when he's wrong. . . . Just a minute, now, there's somebody comin' in."

It was true. A tall, lean figure was

entering the office. He nodded to Jo—a fine, clean-cut fellow in his early forties. Then he turned and noticed Brastle, and flashed him a quick smile.

"Hello, Brastle," he said. "Didn't expect to see you here."

It was quite apparent that Brastle had not expected to see the newcomer, either. If confusion ever showed in a man's face, it was plain in Brastle's. He gulped something incoherent, seized his hat and would have made a grab for the bills, which still lay on Caddis' desk, had not that citizen neatly tripped him.

"I wouldn't do it if I was you, feller," Jo Caddis called out. "I've got a cop that'll be here in a minute."

Brastle did not wait. He was gone.

CADDIS waved his friend to a chair and began talking in another tone.

"Seems to be a little trouble about your quicksilver, feller. When you talked to John Sindlon, here, on the phone, you got him all upset on account your boy-friend Brastle had been to him tryin' to sell him a mine in Haiti. Well, John's gets me on the phone, see? He figured that if there was anything phony about *two* mines in Haiti, Jo Caddis oughta know about it. Catch? And listen, feller: if I was to tell you I sold that lease already, would it make you sore?"

"What do you mean, sold it, Jo?"

"Like I said, son. John Sindlon, here, is tops in mining engineers, see? I sold him your mine couple days ago. Brastle tries to sell him the same mine, see? Then you called him on the phone and tried to sell it again. And when you mentioned my name—well, it was just too screwy. So John gets me hot on the wire and wants to know what the hell. I fixed it so's he'd be down here about now—a li'l' surprise party for your noble friend here."

Bentley stared. "So—you sold—it?"

"Yeah," said Jo. "With this embargo on quicksilver gone through, John Sindlon can raise the capital to build a road to bring the ore out, son. Two hundred thousand aint a drop in the bucket on a job like this."

"Two hundred thousand—dollars!"

Jo Caddis shrugged. "That's your share, son. John's payin' me three hundred grand. I figure I'm entitled to a li'l' commission."

Our Mr. Destiny has made a great deal of money out of this Personal Mystery business. But we've heard that a great deal of quick money may be a tower that topples. . . . Don't miss the next exciting installment.



When Tong-Men Laugh

A former officer of the U.S. Narcotic squad tells of a hair-raising moment.

By LEMUEL DE BRA

WE met by appointment in a private booth in the old Hang Far Low restaurant in San Francisco's Chinatown. It was nine o'clock of a chill rainy night in January.

There were three of us. The leader was a husky chap sent out from Washington to help our small, untrained force take a crack at the dope traffic then flourishing on the coast. He has since gained international fame as a clever and fearless narcotic agent. Because he is still in the service, I'll have to call him plain Bill Doan.

The second man was a well-known newspaper writer who had been doing under-cover work for us. I'll call him Morton.

Because I had worked in Chinatown on smuggled opium investigations, Agent Doan made me the third member of his "flying squad."

Doan took a noisy swig of the scalding hot tea the pretty Chinese waitress had served, lit a cigarette, and tossed me a flimsy blue envelope. I didn't need to be told it was a tip. We were getting them in every mail. Some were worthless; others led us to good catches.

This one in the blue envelope came very near being the end of all three of us!

The note was written in ink and in fair English. I decided that the writer was an Americanized Chinese who was

either satisfying a grudge, or performing what he considered his duty as a "good Chinaman." And there are more good Chinamen than most Americans seem to realize.

As I recall that tip, it ran something like this:

Mr. Doan: You like catch Chinaman with lots opium you go night time room 30 top floor number 180, ——— Street. Chinamen no smoke there. Just sell. You look good, you find.

A Good Chinaman

I told Doan I thought the tip had a genuine ring, and that I knew the joint. The lower floor was occupied by a Chinese poolhall. The second and third floors were used as a rooming house.

"We'll crack it," concluded Doan. "Alone. I wasn't able to get hold of the Chinatown squad. And you know the Customs agents are not allowed to search at night. So—let's go."

We got into our raincoats, left the restaurant separately, and in a few minutes were on Blank Street near our destination. In spite of the chilling rain there were quite a few Chinese abroad, and I thought I detected an air of excitement. This puzzled me, but I forgot it when I caught Doan's signal. I crossed the street. The three of us went unhesitatingly up the stairs.

When we had a sufficient force, it was

REAL EXPERIENCES

In this department readers and writers meet to tell fact stories of their most interesting adventures. (For details of our Real Experience Contest, see page 3)

our custom to surround a place before striking. With just the three of us, Doan decided on a quick dash. So at the third floor we walked quietly to number 30. Undercover Agent Morton gave the Chinatown rap—a swift *rat-a-tat* with his fingernails.

We crowded close, Doan and Morton ahead. When the door was cautiously opened an inch or so, and a Chinese face showed, they hurled the door wide, barged in and seized the Chinaman. I followed, kicked the door shut behind me, and stood there.

At a glance I saw this was an ante-room. The only occupant was the guard who had opened the door. Just opposite us was another door, open. Through it I saw a large, well-lighted room, heard some one call to the guard in Chinese.

Doan and Morton were already hustling the guard into the other room. Here we got a surprise.

IN this room were about thirty Chinese—young men between twenty and thirty years of age, powerfully built men with hard faces and hostile eyes. When I had time to think about it, I realized they were the most dangerous-looking bunch of men I had ever seen.

At our entrance, every man sprang up. All shouted something in Chinese. Doan and Morton tried to make themselves heard, but it was useless.

Near me a big fellow picked a huge revolver off a stand. I yelled a quick warning, but Doan had already seen him. Before I could add that the Chinaman was only trying to put the gun in his pocket, Doan struck.

Doan never did anything by halves, and he packed a terrible wallop. His fist caught the fellow on the cheek, hurled him a dozen feet across the room. He fell over onto a bed.

What happened to the gun, I did not see. The big Chinaman got up without it. There was a trickle of blood on his cheek. His eyes were blazing. In two jumps he was in the corner used as a kitchen.

He grabbed up a huge cleaver.

"I'll kill you!" he shouted at Doan in English, brandishing the cleaver. "You'll never get out of Chinatown alive! I'll put you in a box!"

Now, a cleaver is an ugly weapon. And one can be hurled with terrific speed and deadly accuracy. I felt sure something frightful was going to happen. So I snatched out my service .38.

Instantly Agents Doan and Morton and the Chinaman with the cleaver were blotted out of my sight. To my horror, I found myself staring into the muzzles of a dozen or more big automatics.

I felt certain that was the end.

But in the back of my mind it had been growing on me that there was something very queer about this whole situation. Never before had I seen so many armed Chinese in one place. Never before had a Chinese pulled a gun on me. The Chinese were invariably friendly to us.

It struck me suddenly that they did not realize who we were, that they had not understood what Doan and Morton had shouted to them in English.

I had picked up a few Chinese phrases—enough, I hoped, to keep from being shot for a thief. Now, above the cry of the Chinaman swinging that cleaver, I shouted:

"Ho toy! Ho toy!"

The Chinese stared. One of them repeated what I had said. Then they looked at each other—and some one laughed.

That broke the tension. Instantly the roomful of Chinese were laughing uproariously.

A fellow whose face seemed familiar to me stepped up.

"I suppose you are Government men looking for opium," he said. "There is none here. This is our tong headquarters. We are not smokers. We are fighters. You have had a very narrow escape."

At that, Undercover Agent Morton spoke up:

"I forgot to tell you, Doan. We got a wire today that a tong war is brewing. Killers have been imported from New York. Let's get to hell out of here!"

We got out. And we never learned who sent us that "tip," nor what the sender hoped to accomplish by it—unless it was to get us riddled with tong lead.

Out in the rainy street, away from that roomful of hired killers, my mind began to function again. I broke out laughing.

"What the hell tickles you?" demanded Bill Doan. He wasn't feeling any too good over our fruitless raid.

"When tong-men laugh, they aren't so dangerous," I replied. "And no wonder they laughed. I intended to say '*Suey quan*'—which means, roughly, '*Customs men*.' But with a dozen big guns staring me in the face, I told those killers '*Ho toy*.' And '*Ho toy*' means—'*Good luck*!'"

Buckshot Barrage

Wild flying in a Central American revolution—as told to Tracy Richardson,



By COLONEL WILLIAM C. BROOKS

AT the time that Lee and I were flying for the Nicaraguan Government against the rebel forces of General Moncada and his chief lieutenant Sandino, our greatest safety factor was the superstition of the native soldiers, mostly barefoot Indians. Airplanes were new to Nicaragua, and they believed the planes could see—that is, they could at least see straight down! It never seemed to occur to them that the pilot could turn his head and look forward or backward. Due to this belief, they would never fire at us when we were directly overhead; but when we were approaching them or past them, they would tear loose at us with everything they had; and it wasn't for lack of ammunition expended that they didn't bring us down.

We encouraged this idea of airplanes being able to see. Then one of the more educated rebel officers told his men the airplanes could *not* see, and ordered them to shoot while we were directly above them. That trip I got fifteen bullet-holes through my plane—one passed through the seat and between my legs, and another took away part of the throttle.

That would never do. As long as the rebels thought we were some sort of supermen, we could do effective reconnaissance work, even though our equipment was never intended for war flying. But after much thought and many conferences we hit on a scheme.

Our super-idea was simple. We built a hopper in each of our planes and filled them with a bushel or so of buckshot. In case the rebels should shoot at us while we were over them, we planned to drop a few pounds of the shot—and a buckshot falling a few thousand feet can, and did, hurt plenty. First we caused the story to be spread around the rebel troops that if they fired on us while we were overhead, we would cause their

bullets to fall directly back on them and kill the ones who fired the shots.

And it worked! Lee and I were trying to locate the headquarters of Sandino, the rebel bandit lieutenant. We had only one way of telling whether or not any forces seen in the bush were federal or rebel. We'd drop a harmless but noisy smoke-bomb close to them. If they were federal forces, they would wave a white flag; if they were rebels, they'd run as if the Old Nick were after them.

Whether they fired on us or not didn't mean a thing. Our own forces were just as apt to fire at us as were the rebels. Sandino's forces got tired of our flying around their secret headquarters. They opened up on us while we were directly overhead, and we dumped about a peck of buckshot, and followed with a special-built dynamite bomb we were trying to get rid of. The buckshot scattered the rebels, and by some stroke of luck the bomb hit one of the houses where Sandino had his ammunition stored. It was three weeks before we could locate the rebel forces again; and that particular army never fired *up* at us again.

But we were not always so lucky. That was a very serious war. Men were being killed by hundreds and thousands, and now and then even a general would get wounded. Every time we got off the ground we took chances—and desperate chances, it looked like; but we never thought of them as much more dangerous than some of the crazy stunts we pulled daily when we were with a flying circus back in the States.

Our ships were Swallows, equipped with O.X.X. motors, and were never intended to fly over such jungle country as this; and our sole armament was pistol and machete. Of course we had bombs. In fact, bombs were our greatest worry.

The younger sons of the first families of Managua, where our flying-field was

located, took to aerial warfare, from the ground, like a duck to water. To be connected with the Air Service in any capacity was to be a hero. These youths all became bomb-makers, although their sole qualification was that they knew a bomb went *boom*. It would take reams to describe the types of bombs we were forced to carry in our planes and drop on the enemy. If they had been as effective as they were weird-looking, there would not have been a man, woman or child left alive in all Nicaragua.

We were told that General Moncada, the rebel leader, was quartered on a ranch at White Horse Mountain; that he had a huge store of ammunition there, and we must destroy it. It was an order. The delegation of youthful bomb-makers delivered their daily supply of monstrosities to us, and we set out on a quest for White Horse Mountain.

After flying a hundred miles into rebel territory, we spotted the ranch. It was a nice affair, red-tiled roofs gleaming through the trees on the bank of a small but beautiful lake. As we circled overhead, we could see soldiers dash madly from the ranch buildings, throw themselves into the saddles and race for the protection of the forest. That suited us fine. We had no particular desire to bomb humans, so we circled round and round, dropped some buckshot to stimulate them to greater speed, and a couple of small percussion bombs to be sure the buildings were clear. Then we lined off and started bombing in dead earnest.

Our airplanes were not equipped with bomb-sights or bomb-dropping devices. It was a guesswork proposition of heaving them over the sides by hand. We came back and made another run on our target. Some of the bombs exploded; some did not; but most of them gave off smoke like an oil fire.

After the first few bombs exploded we had to guess where the ranch buildings were, for they were hidden by a cloud of smoke and dust. Cheerfully I signaled to Lee, and he pushed back his goggles and signaled, with his clenched fist, the thumb and little finger extended, that it was time for a drink. So we turned and made our way back to Managua.

We reported that we had located the ranch at White Horse Mountain and bombed the buildings; that we had seen fleeing men, one of whom we thought was General Moncada himself. Joy reigned in Managua. We were wine and dined and treated as heroes.

A week later President Dias received a very polite letter from General Moncada, thanking him for the services of his aviators, who, so he stated, had bombed with wonderful precision. "My men were starving," wrote the General. "We were without provisions of any kind, and were about to eat our horses. Then, by the blessings of God, your intrepid aviators visited our ranch, rained their bombs into the lake in front of the ranch-house, and thanks to them and you, my dear President, we have been feasting on fish for the past week and have plenty left for another fortnight."

Fortunately for Lee and myself, they did not believe Moncada's letter; and by his own admission, we had bombed his ranch headquarters. So we continued to wear our haloes—that is, for a while.

The Marines were on hand. They were not taking sides, as yet, but were merely there to protect foreign interests. An American diplomatic official came down to negotiate peace between the Government and the rebels. He offered ten dollars for every rifle, and twenty dollars for every machine-gun surrendered by the rebel soldiers. Half the federal soldiers made arrangements with some friend in the rebel army to turn in their rifles as well as their own, and there was a grand pay-off. The museum in Managua was looted, and all the antique blunderbusses that came over with the Spanish *conquistadores* were turned in for the ten pieces of American silver.

ANYWAY, that gave the soldiers money, more than most of them had ever had in their lives, and so the war automatically ceased while the soldiers celebrated, and the leaders met in a peace conference at Tipa Tapa, a small village on the river of the same name. The Marines were there to maintain neutrality, and leaders of both factions dined while they talked.

Lee and I made a contract with an American news-photographer to fly over the peace-conference site and make aerial photographs of the event. We wanted to fly for once where it was peaceful.

We flew in one ship. Lee piloted, and I operated the camera. We circled overhead, taking pictures and having a fine time. Then we noticed that the peace conference was apparently disrupted—men were running in all directions, and we could hear the whine of bullets as they came close. A leaden slug came up through the seat of the plane and through

Lee's pant-leg. It was time to leave, for when peace delegates fight among themselves, they fight; besides, we didn't have any bombs with us, and no way to take part in the fracas.

We landed back at the Managua flying-field, delivering to the photographer's assistant the films we had exposed.

A Marine officer came to our hotel quarters and between threatening us with arrest, and laughing at and with us, he told us what had broken up the peace conference. It was true we were not armed on that photographic flight, but we had both forgotten the hopper full of buckshot. As we circled over the gathering, somehow the slide had opened, and while we photographed, the shot had poured down on federal and rebel alike.

It was hard to convince them it had all been an accident, and that we had not

tried to assassinate the leading men of Nicaragua. Finally the American commission persuaded them to resume negotiations, but they stipulated that on no account were the American aviators to be permitted to take to the air while the conference was in session.

Peace was declared. Four thousand Marines and a force of eight airplanes took over the job. Later one of the Marine officers, telling me about the tough time they had had chasing Sandino, said they had made one great mistake: they had not used our buckshot barrage. The flyers had thought it a great idea, but the officials had pronounced it undignified.

Funny thing, Lee and I had never thought of our dignity; we were just trying to save our skins, and it suited us just as well to scare a man as to kill him.

The Platypus Nugget

*Its discovery by an American prospector broke up
an Australian revival meeting.*

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

(Continued from page 5)

The procession had covered half the distance separating the shearing-shed from the public house when there was an interruption in its forward movement. A man named Zachariah Snade, who was not beloved in the township, caught up with the crowd. He placed his fat hands on the shoulders of Frisco Harry and whispered into his ear. Snade was for secrecy—no rooftop stuff for Zachariah! "Keep your mouth shut!" he gasped. "Silence, for God's sake! Company! Millions for us. Millions!"

Possibly the exile had visions of that life he had left. Suddenly he turned to the waiting crowd of men and spoke in the quiet voice with which he had addressed the preacher. "Sorry, boys," he said. "Wisdom, in the shape of Mr. Snade, forces me to put off my little confession as to the spot where I found this morsel of gold." And he turned and walked toward the Snade cottage.

A niece of Zachariah Snade kept house for him—a young girl of nineteen, named Mary Morton, and she was very beautiful. Very beautiful and kind. An hour after the discovery of the nugget I carried a parcel of groceries to the cottage, and when I had pushed a way through the

crowd of men who milled up and down on the dusty roadway, she spoke to me. "Jimmy," she said, in a soft whisper, "would you like to see the Platypus?"

I couldn't speak, my lips dry with the thought of being close to the treasure; so she took my arm and led me into the parlor. Zachariah Snade was sitting at one side of a small rough table made of myall wood, set close to the window, and opposite him sat Frisco Harry. On the table was laid a sheet of foolscap paper, and on this was the Platypus Nugget.

Open-mouthed, I stood and stared.

Frisco Harry spoke gently to me. "Come and give it a pat for luck, Jimmy," he said; and when Mary Morton pushed me forward, I put out my hand and stroked the thing—stroked the smooth, cold spur that was so much like the bill of a platypus. I thought of the words of the preacher. He had said Satan made chains out of gold to pull men down to hell. I hoped Satan wouldn't get Mary Morton. And I didn't want him to get Frisco Harry. I didn't care much what Satan did with Mr. Snade.

THE evening closed in. Two hundred men stood in the road watching the lighted window of the Snade parlor.

About midnight the manager of the Bank of New South Wales arrived on horseback from Bundoora, the nearest township. A dozen or more men came with him. The bank manager was admitted to the Snade cottage. When he came out, he was surrounded by the curious. He said he had weighed the nugget. It appeared to be pure gold. Its weight, he said, was two hundred and sixteen ounces and seven pennyweights.

He spoke of the remarkable likeness it bore to the head and bill of a platypus. Men listened to him when he put forward a strange theory. He, the bank manager, really believed that it was a fossil head of the *Ornithorhynchus* that Nature with some freakish plan in mind had turned into yellow gold.

Years before, the duck-billed platypus had been plentiful in a small stream that had then emptied itself into Death Lagoon, but this stream had dried up through the great drought, and the little mammals had probably died.

In the quiet before sunrise, the men in the road were startled by the sound of singing that came from the old shearing-shed. The preacher, being penniless, had spent the night in the shed, and was now welcoming the hot sulky morning with a hymn. The words sounded strange in that Outback township.

*O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie,
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light,
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.*

A lot of hopes and fears were in the hearts of the men who milled up and down the dusty road in front of the Snade cottage, but "the everlasting light" in their minds was the Platypus Nugget.

The secret concerning the exact spot where the nugget was found was made public by midday. Frisco Harry, Zachariah Snade, and a dozen close friends of the latter registered claims with the mining warden whose office was in Bundoora. The field was a stony plateau, called Bandicoot Run, and within twenty-four hours the barren stretch of land was pegged out with hundreds of claims whose owners dug furiously in the hope of finding a double for the Platypus.

The "rush" was on. Bandicoot Run became overnight a tent city. The clarion call of gold was heard across the plains.

Drovers, shearers, shepherds and shop attendants came hotfoot across the countryside. Mad wild days followed. Bandicoot Run was torn to pieces by spade and pick, but not an ounce of dust was panned to support expectations raised by the finding of the nugget. The Platypus was a freak find, Bandicoot Run a washout.

IT was on the day the first batch of disgusted diggers was leaving the field that a startling thing took place. The Platypus Nugget was stolen!

Parched tongues shouted the story. Zachariah Snade, who had by some arrangement become a part owner of the nugget, had taken the precious lump of gold from his safe to show it to a mining capitalist who had arrived from Sydney. He had placed the nugget on the myallwood table near the window, and while he had turned to the buffet to get a drink for his visitor, a thief had pushed aside the wire fly-mesh and grabbed the treasure! In an instant it had disappeared!

The troopers were on tiptoes. From a neighboring police station they brought at a gallop a young black-tracker supposed to be possessed of powers that would put a bloodhound to shame. With him came his *lubra*, a prepossessing black wench with whom he consulted at times while making a survey.

The aboriginal was led to the window through which the thief had thrust an arm. The crowd, kept back with difficulty, watched in silence as the tracker examined the sun-baked ground of the Snade garden. The afternoon was closing in, and in the half-light, the powerful black looked a queer devilish figure. Bareheaded, his only covering was a tattered pair of khaki shorts. The *lubra*, barefooted and hatless, wore a cotton overall.

The tracker, bent double, stared at the hard ground which, to the eyes of white men, showed no trace of a shoe. His movements thrilled the crowd. The muscular body of the fellow held their eyes. He was a black Nemesis.

With a short explosive bark he moved, face to the ground, toward a small clump of wattle some twenty feet from the window. For a minute he stood half hidden by the bushes; then, still bent double, he started in an easterly direction, the *lubra* at his heels. Immediately behind them the three troopers ran abreast, with the strung-out crowd following. The hunt was on.

Skirting the scattered "humpies" and the few fenced areas, the tracker ran,

reading signs on the dry ground that no white man could read—a disturbed pebble, the slow upward movement of a recently trodden blade of dry grass, the body of a freshly-crushed insect. Streaming after him came the gasping, sweating, pop-eyed crowd.

The tracker turned toward Death Lagoon, toward the stagnant sheet of water. Surprise clutched the troopers and the pursuing mob. Why the lagoon?

The hard ground gave way to evil black mud as the tracker came close to the water. He halted, and pointed to the marks of boots. Troopers and followers stared at them. Whose shoes had made the tracks in the mud?

A trooper spoke to the sniffing tracker. "One feller thief been along here? You no savee whaffor?"

The *lubra* answered the question. "Jacky say him come here go way quick," she said. "Make little dance on mud. Jacky no know whaffor."

The trooper swore softly. Why would the thief of the Platypus Nugget do a little dance on the mud? The Law turned to speak to the tracker, but the black, with another bark, started off at a gallop.

Heading back toward the township now, face close to the earth as he loped along in the dusk, the *lubra* at his heels, the puzzled troopers and cursing crowd stumbling in their wake.

Once or twice the black halted and ran back for a few yards like a reader who has missed the sense of a preceding paragraph and wishes to check up; then with that explosive bark, he was off again.

Suddenly out of the dusk the tumble-down shearing-shed loomed up before the black. He halted and dropped quickly to the ground. Months before, he had tracked a cattle-thief to his hiding-place and had been welcomed with a charge of buckshot. Now the memory of that reception sprang into his mind, and he wriggled behind a stump and dragged his female companion down beside him.

The *lubra* spoke to the astonished troopers. "Jacky say feller yabber-yabber all time 'bout ol' debbil in hell got plurry nugget," she explained. "Jacky say *you* catchem."

REVOLVER in hand, a trooper went forward. There was no door to the shed, and the Law pushed into the semi-darkness of the interior. The preacher was on his knees, praying aloud.

The trooper approached and spoke. "Sorry, Mister," he gurgled. "The track-

er thinks that some one here pinched the big nugget from old Snade's cottage. He might be mistaken, but—"

"There is no mistake!" cried the preacher, interrupting. "*Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*" So sayeth the Psalmist."

The trooper choked. The preacher was a new type of evildoer to him. "But look here," he growled, "do you mean to say that you grabbed the gold?"

"I stole it to save the souls of the men who were worshipping it!" screamed the preacher. His voice rose. "The devil brought it here to upset my work of salvation! What is written in Isaiah? *'In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.'*"

THE trooper was angry now. "What the hell did you do with the nugget?" he cried. "Where have you got it?"

"I hurled it into the lagoon!" shouted the ranter. "To the moles and the bats! It is now worming its way down through the black mud to the Prince of Darkness from which it came!"

The poor fellow was quite mad. Heat, hunger and religious zeal had turned his brain. A trooper snapped a handcuff to the wrist of the unfortunate. The trooper conferred with his brothers of the Law. One suggested that they should take the preacher to the lagoon.

It was dark now. Men ran for lanterns, and the strange procession headed back to the stagnant lagoon. The whole population of Koobabulla was in the march.

The procession reached the spot on the muddy bank to which the tracker had led them some thirty minutes before. The crazed evangelist agreed that it was the place where he had stood before he hurled the nugget into the lagoon. With a dramatic gesture he pointed out towards the center of the dark pond. "It fell out there!" he shrieked. "I saw the horrible claws of the imps of hell reach up out of the waters and snatch it as it struck! They are with it on its way to the lower regions!"

It was in the great silence that followed the statement of the wandering preacher that Zachariah Snade arrived. Possibly the evident pride which the preacher took in his theft and the manner in which he had done away with the nugget, snapped the little thread of control in the brain of Zachariah Snade. Suddenly,

with a scream like that of a wounded horse, he pulled a revolver from his pocket and fired point-blank.

The bullet struck the right breast of the preacher. He dropped to the ground. Two troopers sprang upon Snade and disarmed him. The mob got out of hand. Some showed sympathy for Snade; but others, recalling how the fat man had induced Frisco Harry to hold back information regarding the nugget, showed a desire to lynch him.

The troopers called on volunteers to carry the wounded preacher; then, with the handcuffed Snade between them, they drew their revolvers and fought their way back to the town lockup.

WHEN an examination showed that the preacher's wound did not place his life in danger, he and Snade were put in adjoining cells. One trooper stood guard while the two others, fearing a riot, rushed back to the lagoon. It was a wild, mad night.

Half a dozen aborigines who were accomplished swimmers were rounded up by Frisco Harry. He promised them tobacco and whisky if they located the nugget, and with much jabbering they went to work. The whole population of the town stayed to watch them. Bonfires were built on the bank; women brought food and drink; men argued wildly as to the distance a person of the preacher's build could throw the nugget. A few of the arguments developed into fist fights.

The blacks reported that the bed of the lagoon was, as the preacher had stated, a layer of mud, and that an object as heavy as the nugget would burrow deep into the slimy ooze. Frisco Harry doubled the promised rewards. He cajoled and bullied them, and in the flickering firelight the naked divers disappeared and reappeared through the long hot night.

At sunrise the tired blacks gave up the quest. They lay stretched out on the bank, refusing to make any further efforts. "Yabber-yabber man speak damn' truth," they growled in chorus. "Plurry old nugget gone to hell!"

The watchers went slowly back to their homes, halting in small groups before the lockup. From the barred window of the cell in which the preacher was confined came faintly the words of his favorite hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." A bullet in the ribs could not stop him.

Men called out to Snade, telling him that the blacks had been unsuccessful in their search for the nugget. Snade did not

answer. Mary Morton brought a breakfast for her uncle; the trooper took it from her and carried it into Snade's cell.

Some fellow started to jeer at Mary, shouting out that old Snade had got what was coming to him, but Frisco Harry stopped him with a punch in the jaw; then he walked back with Mary to the cottage. There were a lot of excited fools in Koobabulla that morning.

The question of draining Death Lagoon was discussed in the days that followed. An engineer came and made calculations. He suggested dredging by buckets, and Frisco Harry built a platform out over the lagoon from the spot where the preacher had stood when he tossed the nugget into the water. For weeks men slaved, hauling up tons of black mud, but they had no luck. The Platypus Nugget that had sewn strife and trouble during the short time it was with us, was lost forever.

At the Quarter Sessions Zachariah Snade was sentenced to six months imprisonment for unlawfully wounding the crazy preacher, but Snade's heart gave out before he had finished five weeks of the sentence. The preacher, adjudged insane, was taken to the State Asylum.

Months later, when Koobabulla had settled back into its old routine, Frisco Harry received a bulky registered letter sealed with the crest and motto of his family. He wept openly when he read the note attached to the huge bank draft. He could go home—to the California he loved.

Frisco Harry married Mary Morton on the day before he left Koobabulla to take ship in Sydney. It was a great day for the township. When I timidly approached the bride to say good-by, she kissed me; the memory of her kiss, like the touch of the Platypus Nugget, is still with me.

ALL this happened forty years ago; the size and value of the nugget have grown in a fabulous manner during the years, but the archives of the Bank of New South Wales in the neighboring township of Bundoora cannot be disputed. The record made by that manager who thought the nugget was a fossil head of *Ornithorhynchus* still exists. It reads:

Weighed this day, December 5, 1898, a nugget, apparently pure gold, strange formation resembling head of duck-billed platypus, found near Koobabulla by an American known as Frisco Harry; weight of nugget two hundred and sixteen ounces, seven pennyweights.

(Signed) William Pierce, Manager.

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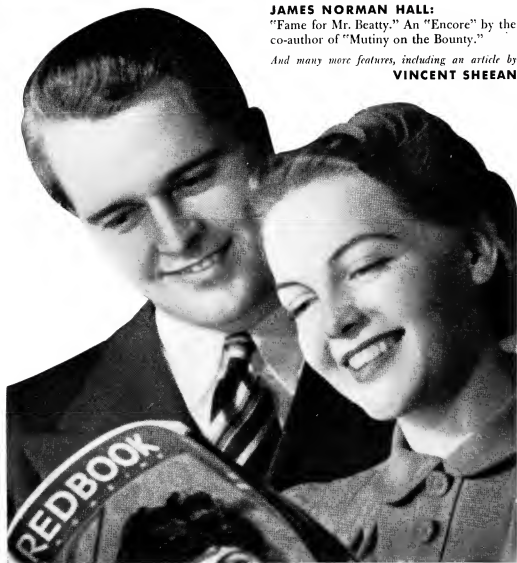
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